

# THE RĀMĀYANA POLITY

P.C. DHARMA



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN — BOMBAY-400 007.

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P.C. DHARMA



1989

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN  
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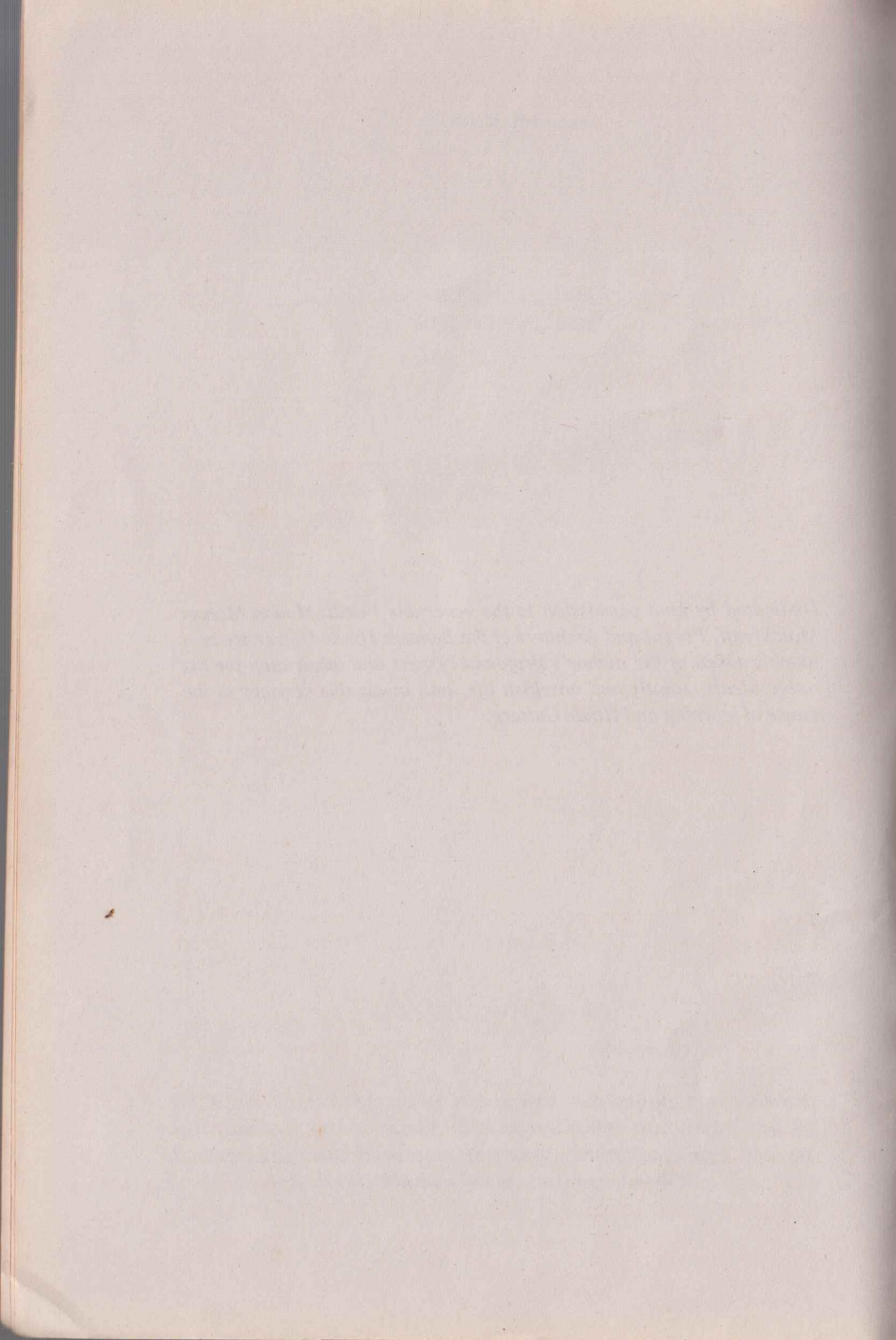
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*Dedicated by kind permission to the venerable Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji, Parent and Architect of the Benares Hindu University as a humble token of the author's profound respect and admiration for his noble ideals, saintly and unselfish life, and invaluable services to the cause of learning and Hindu Culture.*





## FOREWORD

The Vedic Research and Cultural Foundation has been established with the objective of promoting research in our scriptures and for propagating Indian Culture. Among its various activities is a publication programme, and this is the second book in our planned series on various aspects of Vedic philosophy.

In recent times science and technology have made tremendous progress, and have given us fantastic benefits which are unparalleled in human history. And yet that very science and technology have given us the means of destruction, not only of the human race but perhaps of all life on this planet. There is thus a deep crisis in the divergence between knowledge and wisdom, between “ज्ञान” and “विज्ञान”. If we are to survive as a race, we must bridge the gap between science and philosophy, and with the post-Einsteinian Science, with the development of sub-nuclear physics, quantum mechanics and extra-galactic cosmology, the old rigidities of science have collapsed. Various new concepts in physics, mathematics and astronomy have brought about a situation where many of the approaches inherent in the mystical tradition are again becoming relevant.

In my view, India is the only country which can bring about this convergence between science and philosophy, because we alone of all the nations of the world have the philosophical background and also the scientific temper. The time has come when the wisdom contained in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Epics* should be widely disseminated throughout the world. It is with this end in view that the Vedic Research and Cultural Foundation has decided to bring out selected studies in this field.

The present study of the *Rāmāyaṇa Polity* by the late Miss P.C. Dharma brings out the system of administration prevalent during the *Rāmāyan* period. It will be observed from the survey how advanced and elaborate the whole system of administration was in ancient India. The Hindu political institutions were based on

very sound principles which adapted themselves to changing circumstances from time to time while retaining their basic tenets. For example, while the ancient Hindus have tried various political experiments from time to time, including absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, republican forms of government and democracy, the basic objective has always been the greatest good of the people and efficiency in administration. The system of administration during the Rāmāyan period, as analysed in this book, will surprisingly be found to compare favourably even with the most modern concepts of administration.

This study of the *Rāmāyaṇa Polity* will prove that our ancient Epics are still relevant as guides to our present-day problems. I am sure this book will be of interest to students and scholars of political and social sciences, as well as the general readers who would like to have a new interpretation of our ancient literature. It is an auspicious coincidence that *Rāmāyaṇa Polity* is being brought out on the occasion of the 128th Birth Anniversary of Mahaman Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, which falls on 31st December 1989, to whom the original thesis was dedicated by the late author.

31st July 1989

DR. KARAN SINGH



## PREFACE

It is with much pleasure that I commend this thesis. It shows great industry in gathering material and sound judgment in interpreting the material. Though it is all taken out of one book, a good deal of general knowledge has been brought to bear on the study. The ordinary reader of the Rāmāyana feels edified by the subject and is carried away by the entrancing story. He does not pause to note the numerous references scattered on every page to the social and political conditions of the time. These references are mostly hints which require patient co-ordination and reflection for a full understanding. When a conscientious and discriminating researcher puts these hints together and gives a more or less coherent picture of our ancient civilisation, the result is a rich measure of the joy of discovery. Miss Dharma claims that the polity disclosed by Vālmīki and the material organisation of his day mark an advanced stage of development, not much inferior to, though widely different from, the institutions of our own epoch. The facts that she has assembled in this essay justify her claim abundantly. Her simple and straightforward style gives the treatment an air of detachment and adds to its persuasiveness.

In presenting her arguments and conclusions to the present-day scholar, Miss Dharma has necessarily to use the terminology familiar to him. This has a precision and definiteness denied to that of the old time. Danger lurks in all analogy. We may not affix the exact significance of words like ambassador, minister, election, municipality to the Sanskrit names of which they are seeming equivalents. To take an example both easy and interesting. The name king-maker is parallel to the *rājakarṭṛ* of Vālmiki. The Sanskrit of formation is striking and may tempt us to far-reaching comparisons. Yet no two conceptions can be wider apart. The king-maker in English history is not known to the law or the constitution. He is a man of uncommon ability who has raised himself by all sorts of means to a position of unquestioned command and is able to make and unmake kings. Our *rājakarṭṛ* is a Brāhmaṇa or noble-man of recognized status, belonging to a group called into consultation when the place of Rājā is vacant. Could this group choose and determine the



successor? Had it any sanction for enforcing its decision? Though the answer cannot be certain, it is probably negative. The members of this dignified body came together when Daśaratha's death was announced and again when Bharata had concluded his obsequies. Both times the venerable Vaśiṣṭha took the lead and decided the issue for them. On the first occasion he sent for Bharata, on the second he implored Bharata to take the Crown. The young prince, who had a mind of his own, had made his plans already and without hesitation brushed aside the preceptor's counsel, though he knew it had the support of the *rājakarṭṛ* group. In circumstances not wholly dissimilar, Sugriva, professing reluctance all the while, allowed himself to be placed on the throne of Kishkindhā. The poet, however, uses the word *mantrin* in this context, not *rājakarṭṛ*. Nor does he use it on that grand occasion when Daśaratha, having formed the project in his mind of making Rāma the *Yuvarāja*, summons an imposing assembly, including the princes in the neighbourhood, in order to obtain their consent. Had the expression *rājakarṭṛ* acquired a definite connotation and denotation in the political parlance of the day? The commentators, though not constrained by the text, narrow its meaning and apply it only to those who performed certain duties at the coronation.

The caution then has much cogency here as in other inquiries of the kind that identity of names does not imply more than a general correspondence of the conceptions, certainly not a close parity in details or essentials. I am sure I shall have Miss Dharma's assent to this observation. So warned, let the reader place himself with confidence under her guidance. I promise him a golden harvest of wonderment and knowledge.

V.S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

## INTRODUCTION

What historians term the Epic age or Epic period of Indian History really consists of two separate periods — the Rāmāyaṇa period and the Mahābhārata period. Hindu tradition ascribes the two great epics to two different periods, the Tretā Yuga and the Dvāpara Yuga. The term “Epic period” is the name usually given to that period in Indian History, which followed the Vedic age and lasted right up to the Buddhist period. But, the whole of this long period extending over many centuries was not characterised by the same conditions in life throughout. The conditions described in the Rāmāyaṇa are different from those of a later date. At different periods, of the so-called Epic age different kinds of institutions existed. For example, Republics were under trial during the Bharata epoch, and the Buddhist period, but they are not referred to in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Many scholars have written on Ancient Hindu Polity and Sociology. But their attention has been riveted on a study mainly of the Vedas, the Mahābhārata, the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya and other later works on Indian Polity. They have not fully utilised the information available in the Rāmāyaṇa. The Rāmāyaṇa has not been given its due importance. During the preparation of an Index to the Rāmāyaṇa (which is yet unpublished), I came across a number of references dealing with the political and social conditions of the people. These interesting details have been collected and worked up into a description of the polity that existed during the period subsequent to the Vedic and preceding the Bharata period.

My object in writing this thesis is to depict the political institutions as described by Vālmīki in the Rāmāyaṇa. Nothing has been stated herein which is not supported by passages in the Rāmāyaṇa. Various books on the subject have been consulted, and a bibliography is appended.



The significance of the story of the Rāmāyaṇa has been variously interpreted by scholars. Lassen and following him, Weber considered the Rāmāyaṇa as an allegorical representation of the first attempt of the Aryans to conquer South India. But Rāma is nowhere described as founding an Aryan realm in the Dekkan. As pointed out by Macdonell, Rāma's expedition is nowhere represented as producing any change in the civilization of the south. Jacobi opined that the epic was based on mythology. None of these views seems to be acceptable.

The Epic is a biographical sketch of the life and career of Rāma (his youth, his exile, and his fight with Rāvaṇa), composed in the form of a musical composition — the Gita. The main poem consists of Books I to VI though it is II to VI according to some scholars. The poem starts from Book 1-5-1. Evidently the date of composition of this part must have been earlier than that of Book VII which is considered to be spurious by many. It is quite possible that Book VII or a large portion of it might have been later additions. But Hindu tradition has all along accepted this Seventh Book as a part of Vālmīki's work.

In the preparation of this thesis I have to acknowledge gratefully the valuable help and suggestions received from Mr. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar of the Madras University, and my father Dr. P.S. Chandra Sekhar.

The references given in the body of the thesis are to the pages of *Srimad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* edited by T. R. Krishnacharya of Kumbakonam, and published by the Hindi Prachar Press, Madras (1929).

The Kāṇḍas are referred to in Roman figures:—

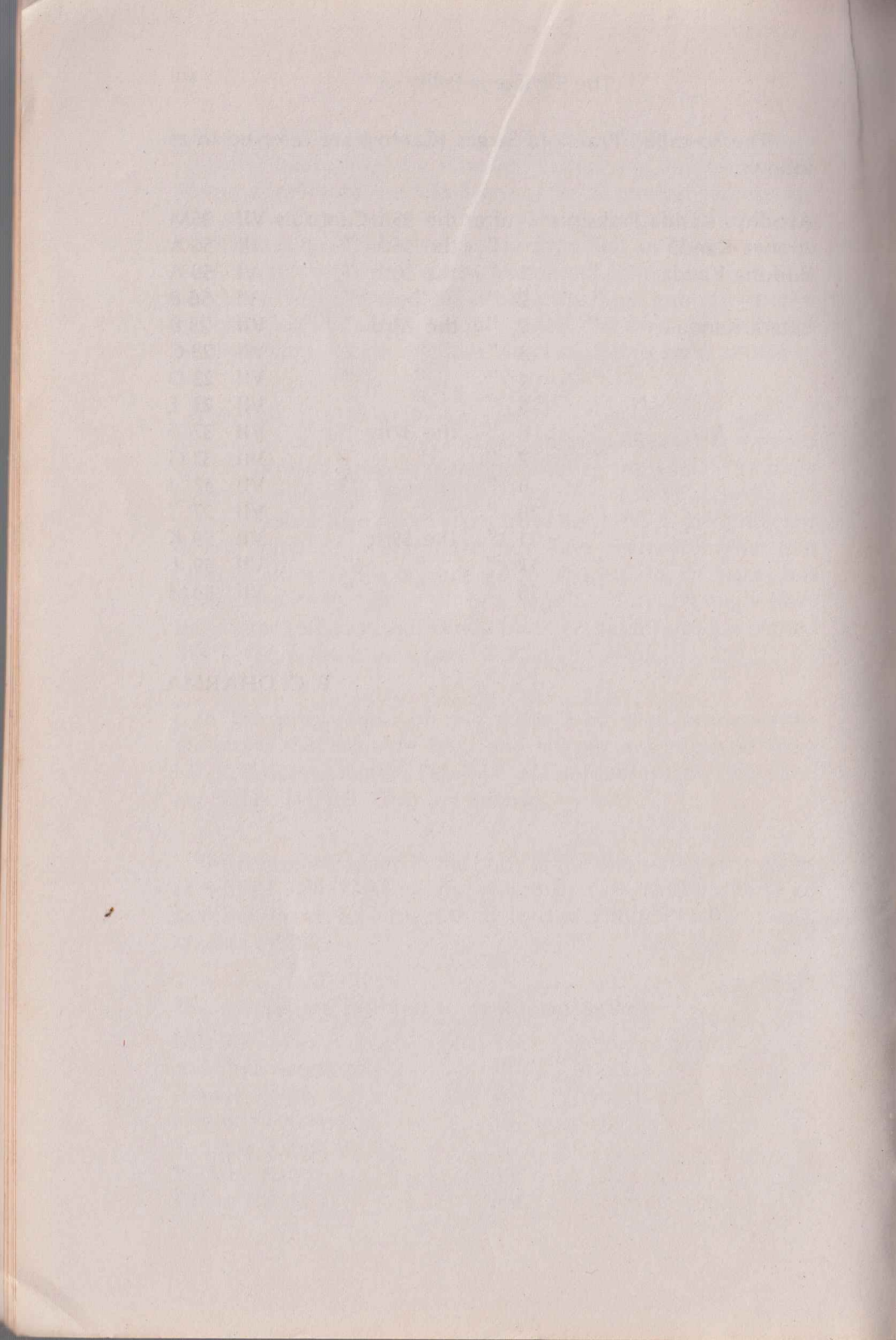
Bāla Kāṇḍa as	I
Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa as	II
Āranya Kāṇḍa as	III
Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa as	IV
Sundara Kāṇḍa as	V
Yuddha Kāṇḍa as	VI
Uttara Kāṇḍa as	VII



The so-called Prakṣipta Sargas (Cantos) are referred to as follows:

Ayodhya Kanda	Prakṣipta		after the 95th Canto	as	VII	95M
Aranya Kanda	"	"	the 56th	"	III	56 A
Yuddha Kanda	"	1	" the 58th	"	VI	58 A
	"	2	" "	"	VI	58 B
Uttara Kanda	"	2	" the 23rd	"	VII	23 B
	"	3	" "	"	VII	23 C
	"	4	" "	"	VII	23 D
	"	5	" "	"	VII	23 E
	"	6	" the 37th	"	VII	37 F
	"	7	" "	"	VII	37 G
	"	8	" "	"	VII	37 I
	"	10	" "	"	VII	37 J
	"	11	" the 59th	"	VII	59 K
	"	12	" "	"	VII	59 L
	"	13	" "	"	VII	59 M

P. C. DHARMA



## CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword .. .. .	vii
Preface .. .. .	ix
Introduction .. .. .	xi

### CHAPTER I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION .. 1-13

Sources; Rāmāyaṇa-An Itihāsa; The Conception of History; Rāmāyaṇa a History; Date of the Rāmāyaṇa; Geographical data in the Rāmāyaṇa; Extent of the Territory; Daṇḍaka Forest and Āryan Settlements; Description of South India in the poem; Inhabitants of India: Three Main Stocks Described; The Āryans; Social Organizations: Four Varṇas; Influence and Prestige of the Brāhmaṇas; The Kṣattriyas; The Vaiśyas; The Sūdras; Four Aśramas; Gṛhastha; Vānaprastha; Sanyāsa; Slaves; The Untouchables or Caṇḍālas; The Vānaras; The Rakṣasas; Aboriginal Tribes.

### CHAPTER II. SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT .. 14-45

Monarchy; Constitutional Monarchy Preferred by the People; Evils of Anarchy or Arajakatva; Many Kingdoms; No Empire; Titles and Gradations of Monarchs; King's Caste; Election; Primo-geniture; Exception to the rule; Election of the Yuvarāja; Vānara Custom of Succession; Crown Prince or Yuvarāja; Rāja-Karṭāraḥ or King Makers and Inter-regnum; Regency; Unanimity necessary when the kingdom was offered by the Sabhā, etc. Coronation as Crown Prince; Coronation as King necessary before succession; Rights of the eldest son how asserted; Coronation and Sacrifices; Age at the time of Coronation as Yuvarāja; Divinity of Kings; Loyalty; Vālmīki's ideal King; Nārada's ideal King; Hanumān's



ideal King; People's view of an ideal King; Education of Princes; Political training of the Crown Prince; Marriage of Princes; Recreation of Kings: Hunting; Hunting with Dogs; King's palace; Door-keeper of the Palace: Pratihāra Dvāra-Pālaka; Quarters for Princes; Duties of Kings; Public interest consideration of kings; King: The protector of the realm; King Daśaratha and his conception of duty; Vānara Vāli on king's duties; Sages on the duty of Kings; Punishment of the wrong-doers: A duty of kings; King to avoid himṣā; Kings to be just; Aim at popularity; Personal attention of kings to state affairs; Daily routine of kings; Darśan of kings; King: Daily audience to the Public; Kings considered responsible for the sins and calamities of the subjects; King's duty to an invaded Country; Kings not to accept Gifts; Restraint of unrighteous Kings; Precedents: A guide to Kings; The King's Happiness in brief; Kings not to leave the kingdom without making proper arrangements; King's retirement: Sanction by the Assembly; The Coronation Ceremony; Royal Processions; King's proprietorship in the land; Sovereignty; Conclusion; Appendix to Chapter II: Rāma's Advice to Bharata on Royal Duties; Kings and Atheists; Kings to take care of the Economic welfare of the Community; Kings not to entrust secrets to women; Kings and animal breeding; Kings and State Affairs; Vices to be avoided; Kings to be avoided as Allies; Special advice to Kings.

### CHAPTER III: CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

.. ..46-64

Ideal Administration; The Machinery of Administration; The Sabhā: Sabhā or popular Assembly; Various names for the Sabhā; Sabhā or Court of Justice; Sabhā or Assembly Hall or Audience Chamber; Designation of the members of the Sabhā or Assembly; Constitution of the Assembly or Sabhā or Pariṣad; Paurajanapada; Janapada or Mofussil Members and Quarters in the Metropolis; Paura;

Janapada (Bāhya); Paurajanapada and Paura Sometimes Equivalent; Paura-janapada a Representative Body; Sabhā a Representative Body; Distinguished Visitors Attending the Sabhā; Representation of Varṇas and Interests; Territorial Representation; Paura-janapada mainly a Vaiśya Representation; Other Sabhās; Rāvaṇa's Sabhā; Functions of the Sabhā; Assembly Rights; Assembly Meeting; Summons; Quarters for Assembly Members; Council Hall; King Ex-Officio President; State Dress of Kings and the Members; Arrival of the President and the Members; Seating Arrangements; Decorum; Assembly Procedure; A typical Session (11-2-2, etc.) of Daśaratha's Sabhā; Procedure in the Sabhā for the Transaction of Business — Discussion — Going into Committee; Execution of the Decision of the Sabhā; Responsibility of the Members in Ayodhya; Responsibilities of the Members in Laṅka; War Session of the Sabhā in Laṅka; The State Drive from the Palace to the Sabhā; The Sabhā Hall: The Seats: Seating Arrangements; Urgent Summons; Salute; Members; Court Dress of Members; Etiquette of Members; Military Guard; Business of Procedure.

## CHAPTER IV: THE MINISTRY

65-77

Ministers and Ministry; Mantrins or Counsellors; King-Makers or Rāja-Karṭārah; Ministers Nominated; Number of Members of the Council and the Cabinet; Mantri-Pariṣad; Amātyas (also Ex-Officio Mantrins); Classes of Amātyas; Selection of Ministers; Qualifications of Ministers; Amātyas of Rāma; The Purohita: A Minister; Amātyas probably of the Kṣattriya Varṇa; Distribution of Portfolios; Duties of Ministers; Co-operation of Kings and Ministers; Cabinet and Kings; The Cabinet Decisions; Ministers had to attend the Sabhā Meetings; Mantrins and Restraint of Kings; Ministers and Coronation Ceremonies; Official costume or uniform of Ministers; Cabinet Meetings in the palace; Cabinet

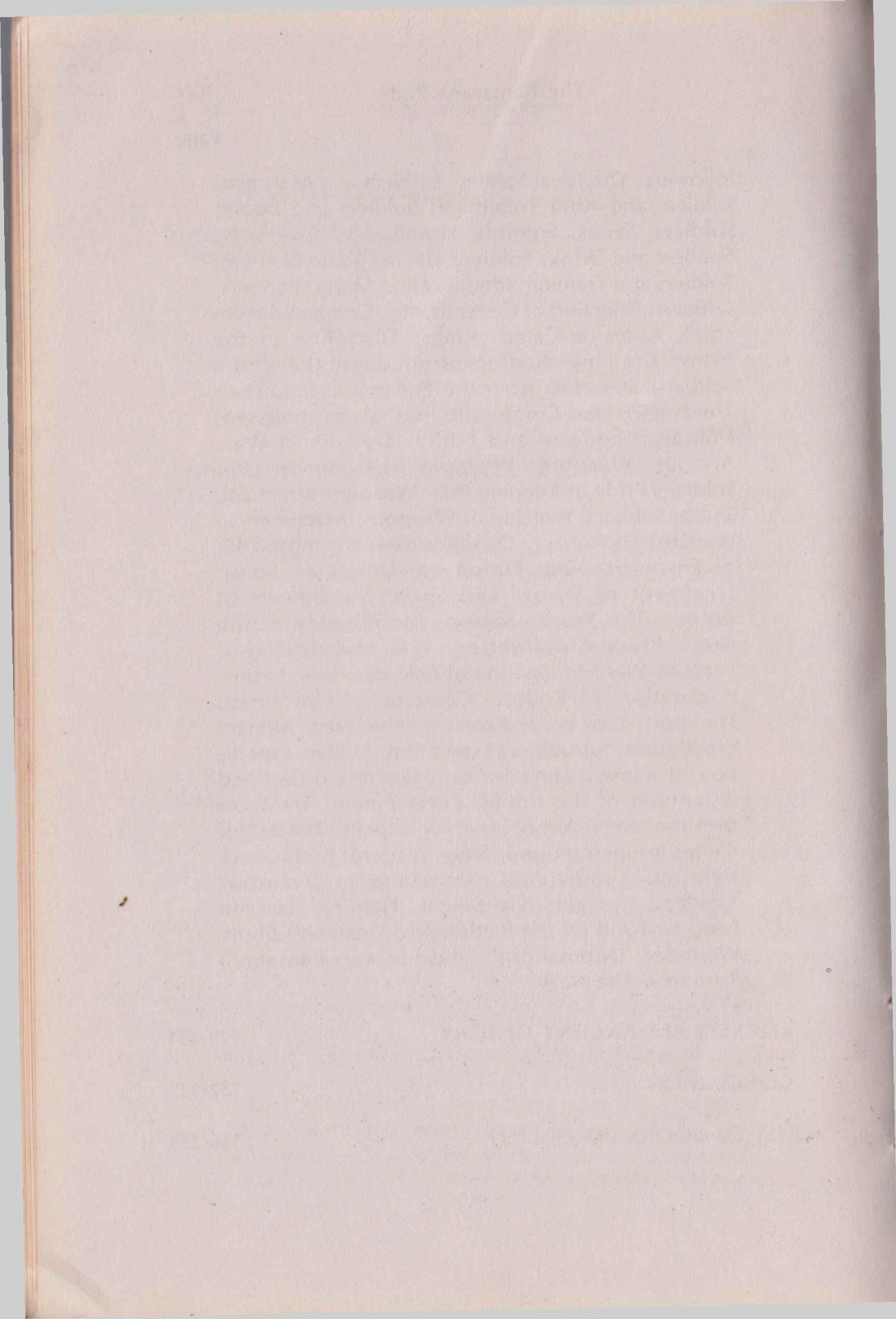


	Page
not to leave the headquarters.	
CHAPTER V: PERMANENT OFFICIALS — DEPARTMENTAL HEADS ..	..78-79
The Tirthas.	
CHAPTER VI: REVENUE ADMINISTRATION ..	..80-81
Taxation; Tribute; Expenditure.	
CHAPTER VII: ADMINISTRATION OF LAW AND JUSTICE .. ..	82-87
Rājadharmā: Principles of Justice; Judges; The Supreme Court; Office Hours of the Court of Justice; Constitution of the Supreme Court of Justice; Instantaneous Admission to Litigants and Petitioners; Serious Crimes; The Police: Police for keeping the peace and regulating the traffic; Intelligence Department: Spies and Spying in Civil Administra- tion; Appendix to the Chapter on Law.	
CHAPTER VIII: LOCAL ADMINISTRATION — MUNICIPAL .. ..	88-95
Divisions of the Country; Pura and Rāṣṭra: Urban and Rural; Local Self-Government in the rural parts; City Municipal Administration; Paura: The City Corpora- tion; Official Control of the City Municipality; Functions of the Municipality.	
CHAPTER IX: MILITARY ORGANISATION AND WARS ..	96-128
Military Department; Causes of War; Preparedness for War; Forts: Varieties of; Fortification of Laṅka; Forces of Various Types; Defences; The Army; Functions of the Four Limbs of the Army; Car- warriors or Chariot Warriors; The War Chariots; Charioteering; Pioneers; Commissariat; Camp	



followers; The Ideal Soldier; Soldiers and Marriage; Soldiers and Kind Treatment; Soldiers and Booty; Soldiers' Syces; Soldiers' Homes and Comforts; Soldiers and Drink; Soldier's Habits: Some of Them; Soldiers and Training; Identification Marks; Banners; Officers; Selection of Generals, etc., Commander-in-chief, Aides-de-Camp: Kings; Discipline in the Army; Creating disaffection amongst the King's Soldiers; Deserters from the Enemy's Camp: Their Treatment; Non-Combatants not to be molested; Military Etiquette and Ethics; Deceits in War; Armour; Weapons; Weapons in Common Use; Soldier's Pride in Keeping their Weapons Bright and Sharp; Soldiers' Worship of Weapons; Machinery in Warfare; Diplomacy; Qualifications of Ambassador or Envoy or Dūta; Espionage: Duties of Spies; Treatment of Envoys and Spies; Movements of Armies; The Proper-Season; Mobilisation of the Army; Peace Mobilisation; War mobilisation of Vānaras; War Mobilisation of Rakṣasas; Expeditions: Preparation of Routes; Camping of the Army; Transport over Water-Rivers on the Way; Military Expeditions; Satrughṇa's Expedition; Military Expedition of Rāma Against Laṅka; Marching orders and disposition of the troops; Encampment; Transport over the sea; Ticket of leave for soldiers; The Battle; Battles in open ground; Siege Warfare; Methods of fighting of individual combatants or Dvandva-Yuddha; Air-Fight; Night-Fight; Fighting Fair and Foul; First-Aid on the Battlefield; Treatment of the Wounded; Disposal of the dead in war; Ransom of Prisoners; The Navy.

ROCKETS ARE ANCIENT HISTORY .. ..	129-131
CONCLUSION .. ..	132-135
LIST OF BOOKS CONSULTED .. ..	136-139



## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*Sources:* Our knowledge of ancient India rests mainly on literary works. As there is a lack of inscriptional and archaeological evidence, the history of pre-historic India has to be constructed largely from the literature of the period. The literature of each age indeed reflects the social and political life of the people.

As the present thesis deals with the political institutions of the Rāmāyaṇa epoch, the source relied upon is the Rāmāyaṇa of Valmiki.<sup>1</sup> There is no other literary work describing the political conditions of this age. The political history of the period has been constructed from various passages found scattered in the poem. As Vālmīki was a contemporary of Rāma, the polity described may be considered to be reflective of the age in which Rāma lived.<sup>2</sup> It may be asserted that the administrative system described by Vālmīki was more ideal than real, and not a true picture of his age. Even granting that the description of government was idealistic, we cannot ignore the fact that the general principles of administration as outlined should have been based largely on the then current traditions. Therefore the Rāmāyaṇa Polity could not have been totally new and novel. Allowing a broad margin for poetic imagination, the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki may be said to embody to a large extent aspects of ancient Indian polity in the early epic age.

Further, an investigation of the Vedic polity reveals to us parallels between the Vedic and the Rāmāyaṇa notions of government. We find, for example, references to elective kingship, assemblies like the Sabhā and Samiti, the importance of the Purohita, the coronation ceremonies, etc., even in the Vedic age. These general ideas of administration are later on met with in the Kauṭilyan polity. The Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya is simply an elaboration of the main features of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Kumbakonam edition printed by the Hindi Prachar Press, Madras, (1929).

<sup>2</sup> Rāma visited Vālmīki when he went to the forest (II—56—16). Vālmīki provided an asylum for Sita when she was discarded by Rāma (VII—49—10 ff.). Vālmīki attended Rāma's Aśvamedha sacrifice (VII—93—1).



government in vogue in the Mauryan and pre-Mauryan periods. There was thus a gradual advancement in political ideas, a discussion of which will be taken up in the conclusion.

*Rāmāyaṇa—An Itihāsa:* Tradition has accorded to the Rāmāyaṇa the position of a history or Itihāsa. Vālmīki called his poem a Kāvya (I-4-7, VII-93-5), a Gītā or Song (I-4-21); an Itihāsa or history (VI-131-113); and an Ākhyāna or legendary story (I-4-26).

*The Conception of History:* The Rāmāyaṇa cannot be treated as history in the modern sense of the term. It is not a history of events confined within the rigid limits of chronology, but contains many interesting details concerning society and administration in the early epic age. History is not mere chronology. According to J. R. Greene, historical studies should aim at a knowledge of the social and political institutions and their evolution, rather than at a mere account of datable facts. Dr. Arnold has stated that "History is the biography of a political Society or Commonwealth."

*Rāmāyaṇa, a History:* In the light of these remarks, the Rāmāyaṇa may be considered as a history of society in the Rāmāyaṇa epoch.<sup>1</sup>

In this poem Vālmīki has given a good description of the way in which the ancient Hindus lived during the early epic period; their habits, customs, dress, ceremonies, beliefs, castes, tribes, forms of government, the status of women, education, science, commerce, industry, navigation, etc. Thus the Rāmāyaṇa throws considerable light on the state of ancient society in India.

R. C. Dutt<sup>2</sup>, has well remarked: "The history of Ancient India is a history of thirty centuries of human culture and progress. It divides itself into several distinct periods. But there is a difference between the records of the Hindus and the records of other nations. The hieroglyphic records of the

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<sup>1</sup>It may be interesting in this connection to mention Rudson Buri's remark on Homer's Iliad (p. 50, History of Greece). He has pointed that the palace description given by Homer in his Iliad is borne out by recent excavations. In the same way future excavations in the United Provinces of India may throw light on the early epic ages as depicted in the Ramayana.

<sup>2</sup>*The Civilisation in Ancient India*, pp. 1 ff.

ancient Egyptians yield little information beyond the names of kings and pyramid builders, and accounts of dynasties and wars. The cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria and Babylon tell us much the same story. And even ancient Chinese records shed little light on the gradual progress of human culture and civilisation. Ancient Hindu works are of a different character, they are defective as accounts of dynasties, of wars—of so-called historical incidents. On the other hand, they give us a full, connected, and clear account of the advancement of civilisation, of the progress of the human mind, such as we shall seek for, in vain among the records of any other equally ancient nation. The literature of each period is a perfect picture—a photograph, if we may so call it, of the Hindu civilisation of that period. Inscriptions on stone and tablets, and writings on papyri are recorded with a design to commemorate passing events. The songs and hymns and religious effusions of a people are an unconscious and true reflection of its civilisation and thought. The earliest effusions of the Hindus were not recorded in writing—they are, therefore, full and unrestricted, they are a national and true expression of the nation's thoughts and feelings. They were preserved, not on stone, but in the faithful memory of the people, who handed down the great heritage from century to century with scrupulous exactitude, which in modern days would be considered a miracle.<sup>1</sup>

*Date of the Rāmāyaṇa:* A question may now be raised regarding the age of this Itihāsa. Considerable doubts exist as to the exact date of the composition. But for the purpose of this thesis there is no need to dwell on the question of the date. The object in this thesis is to describe only the political organisation as depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa. Different dates have been attributed by different scholars. Years ago, the celebrated American Sanskrit scholar W. D. Whitney made the remark which since then has often been repeated: "All dates given in Indian literary history are pins set up to be bowled down again." For the most part, this is still the case to-day as pointed out by Winternitz.<sup>2</sup> It is always a difficult

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1. These remarks are applicable not only to the Vedas, but also to the Smritis, Itihasas, Puranas, etc.

2. Winternitz, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p.25, (Vol. I).



matter to assign dates for pre-historic events. But it would be interesting to mention a few observations that have been made by scholars on the subject.

Weber placed the date of the composition even as late as the 3rd or 4th century A. D., but that view is not accepted. Jacobi was of opinion that the Rāmāyaṇa should have been composed in the 6th or 8th century B. C.

Keith's<sup>1</sup> view was that the epic might be held to belong to the 6th century B. C. Winternitz<sup>2</sup> opined that the Rāmāyaṇa was probably composed in the 3rd century B. C.

Macdonell<sup>3</sup> has argued that the kernel of the Rāmāyaṇa should have been composed before 500 B. C.

The present view of the Western scholars is that the Rāmāyaṇa was reduced to writing in the 5th century B. C. or after.

It is immaterial at present to raise a discussion on such a controversial topic. The discussion of the exact date of the Rāmāyaṇa is reserved for later studies, but for the time being the probable date fixed by Jacobi, namely the 6th to the 8th century B. C. may be accepted.

**Geographical data in the Rāmāyaṇa:** The geographical data furnished by the poem give a fairly accurate description of the land occupied by the Āryans of the period. The poem throws light not only on the geography of India, but also contains information about other countries.

The instructions given by Sugrīva to the search parties of Vānaras as to where to look for Sītā and Rāvaṇa cover 4 cantos (IV. 40, 41, 42, 43), and deal mainly with foreign lands. Some Orientalists have considered these chapters as an interpolation. As the main purpose here is to describe Indian polity of the Rāmāyaṇa age, we may ignore for the present the geography as given in the epic.

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1: J. R. J. S. 1915, p. 318.

2: Winternitz, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 517.

3: Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 309.



Although the story centres round Ayodhyā, the poet carries us through a vast extent of the country. He gives us a very graphic description of the country lying between the Punjab and the confines of Bengal with its numerous rivers, mountains, provinces, etc. He conducts us beyond the Vindhya mountains into the Dekkan, and across the Godāvarī to the most southern point, and the Island of Laṅkā. His description of the land south of the Vindhyās is rather meagre, for the simple reason that he confines his description to the Āryans of northern India, the denizens of Kiṣkindhā who were the allies of Rāma, and to the Rākṣasās of Laṅkā who were Rāma's foes.

*Extent of the Territory:* The extent of the territory occupied by the Āryans stretched from the Punjab on the north-west to Vidēha or Mithilā<sup>1</sup> and Aṅga<sup>2</sup> in the east, to Surāṣṭra in the south-west, and to the great Daṇḍaka forest in the south.

Daśaratha while boasting of the extent of his sway, mentions the extent:

"Mine are the tribes in eastern lands  
And those who dwell on Sindhu's sands;  
Mine in Surāṣṭra, far away.  
Sauvira's realm admits my sway.  
My hest the southern natives fear,  
The Aṅgas and the Vaṅgas hear.  
And as lord paramount I reign,  
O'er Magadh and the Matsyas plain  
Kośal, and Kaśī's wide domain;  
All rich in treasures of the mine,  
In golden corn, sheep, goats and kine."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Wisdom* by Monier Williams, 4th Edition, p. 344. Mithila (North Bihar and Tirhut) situated in the east was an Aryan country at this time, for Janaka is described as conversant with Sastras and Vedas.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. Cit.* p. 340—Anga (now known as Bhagalpore in Bihar).

<sup>3</sup> Ramayana (Griffith's Translation) Literary edition Book II—Canto 10, p. 118. Ramayana (II—10—34 ff.).

Various other States like Mithilā, Viśālā and Pañcālā are also referred to in the text. Apart from these countries we find references to the foundation of a number of cities in eastern Hindustan like Kauśāmbī, Kāmpilya, etc. (I—32—5; I—33—18).

*Daṇḍaka Forest and Āryan Settlements:* The Daṇḍaka forest (Central Provinces?) which Rāma is said to have entered after leaving Citrakūṭa, lay south of the Vindhya range. This region has been located between the Vindhya and the Śaivala mountains (VII—79—16). This was the abode of aboriginal tribes. The Āryans were afraid of those savage tribes, and as a rule never penetrated into those tracts. Except for a few hermitages founded by the adventurous Brāhmaṇs, we do not hear of other Āryan settlements. Rāma visited all those hermitages and by the advice of Agastya (to whom mythology ascribes the credit of being the first to cross the Vindhya range) took up his abode at Pañcavaṭī,<sup>1</sup> and destroyed the Rākṣasa forces stationed at Jañasthāna (situated in the neighbourhood of Pañcavaṭī). Janasthāna was a frontier outpost of the Rākṣasas.

*Description of South India in the poem:* The Rāmāyaṇa does not give many geographical and topographical details about South India. The important places described are Lake Pampā, R̥śyamūka Hill, Kiṣkindhā,<sup>2</sup> Malaya range (Travancore Hills) and the Island of Laṅkā.

Vālmīki's description of the prosperous cities or Nagaras or Pattaṇas and Rāṣṭras (III—42—10) with their groves and

<sup>1</sup> Pancavati—Nasik in the Bombay Presidency—*Indian Wisdom* by Monier Williams, p. 353.

(Pañcavati was situated on the banks of the Godavari).

<sup>2</sup> "It was on the ancient Kiṣkindhā town of the Rāmāyaṇa period, that Vijayangar is said to have been founded."

"Nimbapuram, the north-east suburb of Hampi, contains a huge mound of cinders, which is said to mark the cremated remains of the Great Vali, who was slain by Sri Ramachandra during his sojourn in Daṇḍakāraṇya, Matanga Parvata and Malayaventa Parvatam."

"South Indian Shrines" and "Places of Antiquarian Interest in South India" by P.V. Jagadisa Iyer. See also "South India in the Ramayana" by V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar (Report of the All-India Oriental Conference, Baroda.)



mansions, along the coast of South India as seen by Rāvaṇa, when flying from Laṅkā to Mārīca's abode (III—35—13 ff.), and the description by Sugrīva of the Southern Kingdoms (Āndhrā, Cola, Pāṇḍya and Kerala) (IV—41—12 ff.) furnish undoubted evidence of the existence of other non-Āryan civilisations in the south.

Who were the people whose institutions are described by Vālmīki? Vālmīki has confined himself mainly to the Āryans, and incidentally has made references to the Vānaras of Kiṣkindhā and the Rākṣasas of Lanka. Before proceeding to the main theme it would be interesting to describe these races and the part of the country occupied by them.

*Inhabitants of India — Three Main Stocks Described:* The people described by Vālmīki belonged to three main stocks or types—the Āryans, the Vānaras and the Rākṣasas.

*The Āryans:* The Āryans of this period occupied the Āryāvarta which was the region between the Himālayas and the Vindhyaś. The term Ārya literally meant honourable. The moral standard of the Āryans must have been of a high order as despicable or immoral acts were spoken of as Anārya (not worthy of Āryas) (V—52—12). Their social organization was based on Varṇāśrama Dharma.

*Social Organizations — Four Varṇas:-* The predominating feature of the social organization was the division of the whole society into Varṇas and orders. Varṇa ought not to be confounded with caste, nor are the two terms to be regarded synonymous. The Āryan society pure and simple was divided into four Varṇas based on differences in occupation. Caste distinctions may be regarded to have been rather foreign to the Āryans in the earlier periods. It was their expansion that introduced the question of caste. The necessity of admitting the conquered people within the folds of society might have led to their complex social organization of castes. The origin of caste is however shrouded in mystery. It is pointed out by some scholars that the institution can be traced to the epoch of the Ṛg Veda; others hold it to be a later institution. A discussion on the origin of caste need not be entered into



here. Suffice it to say that the Hindu community during the regio of Daśaratha was divided into four Varṇas (I—16—19; II—82—31). These four Varṇas were the Brāhmaṇa, the Kṣattriya, the Vaiśya and the Śūdra.

*Influence and Prestige of the Brāhmaṇas:* The Brāhmaṇas were the priestly class. They had the right to learn and teach the Vedas, and to perform and conduct sacrifices. The Brāhmaṇas on account of their superior intelligence and learning, made themselves indispensable to the Kṣattriyas and commanded respect from them.

*The Kṣattriyas:* The Kṣattriyas had to fight and protect the people. They were hereditary warriors and rulers. They considered menial labour degrading (II—103—6 f.). The social level of Kṣattriyas and Brāhmaṇas was almost the same. Vedas could be learnt by both of them; and the same mantras could be pronounced. But the Kṣattriyas could not teach the Vedas, and could not conduct sacrifices in the capacity of a Purohita or Chief Priest. The Kṣattriyas could not receive gifts but could only bestow gifts.

*The Vaiśyas:* The Vaiśyas were traders and agriculturists. They formed the bulk of the Ayodhyā citizens. They generally organised themselves into various corporations, the Gaṇas, and Naigamas. As Dvijas, they had the same religious sacraments and rites as the Kṣattriyas and the Brāhmaṇas, and were allowed to recite the Vedas. It was their duty to respect the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣattriyas (I—6—19). They were the most influential citizens in Ayodhyā on account of their numbers and wealth. They had an important voice in the deliberations of the Municipal bodies and the Representative Assembly or Sabhā as we shall see in the sequel.

*The Śūdras:* The duty of the Śūdras was to serve all the three higher Varṇas. They performed menial service. The Śūdras were debarred from Vedic learning (V—28—5). They were chiefly labourers. Labour was of two kinds, Viṣṭi and Karmāntika (II—82—20). Viṣṭi was unpaid labour. The Karmāntikas were the day labourers, who were paid regular wages. It is a matter of regret that the Rāmāyaṇa does not

give many details as to the social habits of the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras.

These four Varṇas had different and definite duties assigned to them, It was the duty of the king to see that the different Varnas performed their respective duties.

*Four Āśramas:* Besides the four Varṇas, the ancients recognised four stages of life or Āśramas:

1. Brahmachārin (the celibate student)
2. Gṛhastha (the householder)
3. Vānaprastha (the hermit, or ascetic)
4. Sanyāsa (the ascetic).

Every man of the three higher castes (Dvijas) passed through these stages of life. The Dvijas went through the ceremony of initiation.<sup>1</sup> After this initiation, which was called Upanayana, every Dvija used to attach himself to a spiritual preceptor or Guru and study the sacred scriptures. The period of studentship was characterised by celibacy and hard discipline which extended to 12 years and more. Subsequently, it was usual to pay a fee to the Guru, and enter the life of a householder or Grhastha.

*Gṛhastha:* The Gṛhasthāśrama or the householder's stage of life was considered the best of the four (II—106—21). In this Āśrama most of the religious ceremonies and sacrifices had to be performed in company with the Dharmapatnī or Sahadharmacāriṇī or wife.

*Vānaprastha:* The third Āśrama or stage of life was called the Vānaprastha (retired life in the forest). The ascetics or hermits wore Valkala or bark and Ajina or deer skin. The hermitage or Parṇaśālā was usually a thatched hut. We can have an idea of an ascetic's hut or Parṇaśālā from the description of Rāma's Parṇaśālā (III—15—20 ff.). The hermits wore matted locks. The juice of the banyan tree was used for matting the locks (II—52—67). The hermits spent their time in the recitation of the Vedas and the performance of sacrifices (III—6—1 ff.). They lived on fruits, roots and forest grains. They avoided meat as a rule.

<sup>1</sup> See Govindarāja's Commentary on I—18—20.



The hermits were all “Nyasta-daṇḍas”— their vow being not to hurt any body (by thought, word, or deed). They were expected to conquer their temper (*jita-krodha*) and also their senses (*jitendriya*) (III-1-20). They were held in great respect in olden days by kings who, when approaching the proximity of the hermitages used to dispense with their retinue and lay aside their weapons (II-90-1). It was the duty of the hermits (and their wives in the absence of the husbands) to offer *atithisatkāra* or welcome offerings to all guests (II-28-14, III-12-26 ff, III-46-30 ff.). The ascetics used to bathe three times a day and observe periodical fasts or *Vrata* (II-28-13, etc.). The stock of household property owned and used by hermits may be gathered from the presents said to have been made to Kuśa and Lava by the sages in Vālmīki's hermitage, when they were pleased with the recitation of the Rāmāyaṇa by the boys (I-4-19 (1) ff.)

Women too practised asceticism in those days—*e.g.*, Śabarī, Vedavatī, Anasūyā, etc. They also wore garments of *Valkala* or bark and had matted locks or *Jatā* (II-28-13 ff.). A female ascetic was known by the name of Śramaṇī or Tāpasī. It is a mistake to suppose that female ascetics were found in India only after Buddha's time (II-38-5).

**Sanyāsa:** The last Āśrama was that of the Sanyāsin or mendicant ascetic. In this stage of life the Hindu renounced the world and all Karma or ceremonies, and wandered and begged for his food. He was known as Sanyāsin or Bhikṣu or Parivrājaka. The Buddhist Bhikku is only a later corrupt form of the Sanskrit word Bhikṣu. The Sanyāsins went about in orange robes, and wore sandals. They used to carry an umbrella, a water pot and a Yaṣṭi or stick (III-46-2 ff). Rāvana as a Sanyāsin is described as wearing a tuft of hair.<sup>1</sup>

**Slaves:** In addition to the free men, there were also slaves — the Dāsas and the Dāsīs (male and female slaves). Vālmīki does not directly say anything about the origin of these slaves but he makes frequent references to the treatment they

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<sup>1</sup> This practice is now-a-days found among the Vaiṣṇava Saṁnyāsins while the Smārta Saṁnyāsins have a clean shaven head.



received. They were often presented like cattle or money to the kings, bridegrooms and Brāhmaṇ priests. The masters evidently had the right to dispose of them like cattle (I—74—5, III—18—9). It might not have been unusual, during the Rāmāyaṇa period to enslave the conquered tribe (II—84—4).

*The Untouchables or Cāṇḍālas:* Separate mention must be made of the Cāṇḍālas. Vālmīki refers to the Cāṇḍālas as the most degraded beings of the period. There is no mention of a separate Cāṇḍāla tribe or caste. Cāṇḍālahood was the result of the loss of status as a member of the Varṇāśrama society. They were untouchables and were deprived of the most elementary rights of citizenship. They were on a lower level than the lowest savage tribes. We have evidence that there was a community of Cāṇḍālas in those times. They were very much like the present-day untouchables all over India.

Besides the Cāṇḍālas, there was another class of crude and deformed untouchables, called Muṣṭikas, living upon carcasses and dog's flesh (I—59—19).

The existence of "untouchables" is certain. But it is not clear whether the Cāṇḍālas only or other inferior tribes also were considered untouchable. The descendants of the untouchables were also untouchables. They could not enter into the temples, palaces, houses of Brāhmaṇas and places of worship (VII—59K—19 f.); but the king could by special orders sanction their admission (VII—59K—23).

*The Vānaras:* Modern critical scholars would regard the Vānaras as a mythical tribe. But the type of civilisation enjoyed by them as portrayed in the epic would tempt us to regard them as a separate tribe. It is quite possible that the Vānaras might have been an earlier wave of the Āryans who had been driven south by a later wave or they might have been an aboriginal race. It is very probable that some of the sages like Agastya who travelled southwards, might have spread the Āryan culture amongst them. They must have been widely spread over many hills and forests in Central India though their capital was in Kiṣkindhā (IV—37—2 ff.; —26—23 ff.). Whatever this may be, many of their institutions, social and political, bore a resemblance to those of the Āryans.

We can even distinguish sub-tribes of Vānaras, characterised by differences in complexion (Canto 26—book VI and Canto 37 of Book IV). They were certainly not monkeys or bears as indicated by their names. Monkeys and bears were evidently totems of their tribes (Vānaras and Rākṣasas). Vālmīki has depicted them as possessing tails but it must be a mere poetic fiction.

*The Rākṣasas:* The Rākṣasas were probably descendants of a pre-historic race that inhabited Daṇḍaka and the island of Laṅkā. Janasthāna in the south of India was an outpost or the colony of the Rākṣasa king Rāvaṇa. The Rākṣasas were cannibals and were generally characterised by their savagery, uncouth features, dark complexion, low morals, and hatred of the Brāhmaṇas. Vālmīki has described the existence of many Āryan customs in Laṅkā like the worship of fire, etc. But these customs were evidently confined only to the ruling aristocracy of Laṅkā (which consisted of Rāvaṇa and his relations). They were not real Rākṣasas but Brāhma Rākṣasas (*i. e.*, Āryans who had degenerated by the adoption of Rākṣasa habits).

*Aboriginal Tribes:* Besides the Āryans, the Rākṣasas and the Vānaras, Vālmīki mentions other tribes like the Ābhīras of Drumakulya or Maru Kāntāra, the Dāśas, Niṣādas and Kaivartas, who resided in the forests and lived by hunting and fishing (II—50—32; II—84—7 ff.). Niṣādas, and Dāśas might possibly have been different names of the same tribe; while the term Kaivarta was perhaps derived from their occupation.

Other tribes mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa are the Nivāta-kavacas (VII—23—6) and the Kālakeyas (VII—23—17).

*Non-Āryan civilised Tribes of India:* Vālmīki also makes references to the Āndhras, Puṇḍras, Colas, Pāṇḍyas, and Keralas in the south. (IV—41—12 ff.).

*Foreign Tribes referred to in the Text:* References to foreign tribes are also met with in the Rāmāyaṇa. The term Mlecchas evidently included all foreigners in the north of India. The term might have been applied to all the border



tribes. It is probable that there was a large immigration of foreign soldiers and merchants from the surrounding countries into India from time to time. The foreign tribes referred to by Vālmīki are (I—55—2 ff.):

Paplavas	—	Persians?
Śakas	—	Scythians?
Yavanas	—	Mongols?
Kāmbojas	—	Tartars?
Hārītas	—	Difficult to be identified
Kirātakas	—	The Karaten of Ptolemy?

Āraṭṭakas (IV—43—12) were residents of Āraṭṭa, a city in Baktria according to Ptolemy.

It has been already stated that Vālmīki's description is confined mainly to the habits, customs and institutions of the Āryans, the Vānaras and the Rākṣasas. A great similarity existed in the social and political institutions of those three classes.

To get a true bird's-eye view of the existing conditions of society during the period, it is necessary to take into consideration the details given by Vālmīki in the different parts of the Rāmāyaṇa while describing the society in Ayodhyā, Kiṣkindhā and Lankā.

In the following pages an attempt is made to depict the political administration of the Rāmāyaṇa age, by working up all the details into one connected account.

The foregoing outline of social polity will, I hope, contribute to a good understanding of the subject dealt with in the following pages; for, only with a background of social polity, can we approach with ease a study of political institutions.



## CHAPTER II

### SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

*Monarchy:* There were many forms of government in India during the Vedic period, such as Monarchy, Oligarchy and Republics; but in the course of time Monarchy succeeded in practically supplanting all the other forms of government. It is worthy of note that in the Rāmāyaṇa there is no reference to any Republic. The only form of government described is the monarchical. But the Mahābhārata, the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya and the Buddhistic books have unmistakable references to the Republican form of government, though the monarchical form of government was the norm. It is stated in the Rāmāyaṇa that in the Kṛta Yuga (the earliest of the four cycles), people prayed to Brahmā for a king (VII—76—37 ff.), and that he complied with their request. This shows that the ancient Hindus realised the necessity for a strong king, and firmly believed in the monarchical form of government.

*Constitutional Monarchy Preferred by the People:* The form of government during the Rāmāyaṇa period was a limited monarchy. People believed in a firm government by a constitutional monarch. They were in great dread of anarchy or Arājakatva. The evils of anarchy in the absence of a stable government were sufficiently realised (II—67—9 ff.). After Daśaratha's death, the ministers and councillors of his Sabhā met together and requested the Chief Minister and Purōhita Vasiṣṭha, to crown some prince of the Ikṣvāku line, or anybody else whom he considered fit as king. They backed up the request with an enumeration of the evils of anarchy.

*Evils of Anarchy or Arajakatva:* "In a kingless state, people could not carry on their occupations in peace. There would be failure of rain and consequent agricultural distress. The son would disobey the father, and the wife the husband with impunity. Women and wealth would not be safe. There would be no truth or honesty in the transactions of the people. People would not care to beautify the city with parks and temples, for fear of destruction. The Brāhmaṇas would not perform sacrifices for fear of interruption by wicked and

lawless people. Litigants would not get justice. There would be no musical concerts, festivals or pilgrimages. People would not care to recite or listen to the Puranic storeis". "Well-adorned maidens could not resort to the parks in the evenings for fear of molestation. Wealthy people would be afraid of keeping the doors of their houses open, for fear of thieves. Amorous youths and maidens would not dare to drive in pleasure-carriages to enjoy themselves in the neighbouring woods. Soldiers would not care to practise archery. Merchants would not travel far in safety with heavy loads of merchandise. The streets would not be filled with prosperous people racing along the royal roads in their pleasure chariots drawn by spirited horses. The learned disputations of scholars in the woods and groves would cease. People would not visit the temples with sweets, flowers and dakṣiṇā. There would be no patronage of music. People would not care to enjoy themselves with scent and sandal. Nobody could claim anything as his own, as people would be bent upon cheating each other in the absence of a sovereign. Rogues would be free from the fear of punishment by the kings. There would be nothing to prevent people from breaking the law, and they would disregard the rules of caste and their respective duties. They would lose their faith in religion. There would be no distinction between honest and dishonest men. In the absence of a king who is the friend and protector of the people and who is the source of all justice and truth, the evils in the country would be manifold as there would be nobody to maintain law and order"(II-67-9, etc.).

*Many Kingdoms:* Of the many independent kingdoms mentioned, the prominent ones in the Āryāvarta territory (between the Himālayas and the Vindhyas) were Mithilā, Kāśī, Kōsala, Kēkaya, Sindhu, Sauvīra, Saurāṣṭra (I-13-20, etc.), Viśālā (I-47-11), Sāmkāśī (I-70-7), Vaṅga, Aṅga, Magadha and Matsya (II-10-35).

*No Empire:* India during the Rāmāyaṇa period was divided into a number of separate states ruled by independent kings, though Daśaratha claimed sovereignty (most probably as an overlord) over the East, West, North, South, and in all directions (II-10-34 f.). Daśaratha's direct jurisdiction must



have extended only over the neighbouring tributary kings (Sāmanta Rājās).<sup>1</sup>

Though Rāma also claimed for Bharata sovereignty over the whole of India, there was no real coherent empire like the British or the Roman empire, as there were other powerful kingdoms in existence like Mithilā, Kēkaya, etc. The central authority of Daśaratha's empire must have been very weak, exerting itself only on some occasions in certain parts of the country. The jurisdiction of the Emperor can be said to have resembled the jurisdiction of the Moghul Emperors of a later date.

*Titles and Gradations of Monarchs:* Writers on Hindu Polity speak of various grades of kings. Rājā, Mahārāja, Adhirāja (overlord or suzerain), Samrāt (Lord over a State circle or a number of Federated States), Sārvabhauma (or universal Emperor), Cakravartin (Emperor), and Ekarāt are terms met with in Vedic literature. In the Rāmāyaṇa the terms Rājā, Mahārāja, Sārvabhauma and Samrāt had lost the original significance attached to them in the Vedic period. To cite an instance, though Daśaratha was only a Samrāt, Sārvabhaumas are described as waiting at his gates on the day fixed for the coronation of Rāma (II-15-16). The Sārvabhauma of the Vedic period was supposed to be a king over the whole earth. Daśaratha is correctly described as "nata-sāmantaḥ" (I-7-21 and I-18-43), when the sage Viśvāmitra made enquiries of his welfare and asked him whether he had conquered all the neighbouring kings—Samnatāḥ sāmantaḥ ripavo jitah. Daśaratha is referred to as Rājan (I-7-21 and II-2-2), and as Mahārāja (II-18-15, II-14-42 and II-57-32). A real Emperor in the sense in which we understand the term to-day (one with undisputed sovereignty over the whole of India with a central controlling machinery) did not exist during the Rāmāyaṇa period.

*King's Caste:* The kings were all Kṣattriyas. The Brāhmaṇas acknowledged their inability to rule (I-14-46ff);

bhavān eva mahīm kṛtsnām eko rakṣitum arhati  
na bhūmyā kāryam asmākam; na hi śaktāḥ sma pālāne

<sup>1</sup> Ayodhya streets are described as "samanta-raja-sanghah balikarmabhih avrtam" in I-5-14 and I-7-21.

ratāḥ svādhyāyakaṇe vayaṃ nityaṃ hi bhūmipa  
niṣkṛayaṃ kincid eveha prayaçchatu bhavaṇ iti.

The Vaiśyas fully occupied with trade and agriculture, were satisfied with the right of electing the king. More shall be said about this later on.

*Election:* Kings were hereditary as a rule. But the new kings could not succeed as a matter of right. They had to be formally elected by the people's assembly. The kings succeeded one another by the law of primogeniture. But the new king had to be first nominated by the reigning King and the Cabinet of Ministers, and then elected by the Sabhā or the Popular Assembly (representing the people of the city and the province and probably including the tributary princes or their ambassadors as well).

The Rājānaḥ in the Sabhā of Daśaratha were evidently princes, military officers, and ambassadors or consuls, though not expressly stated. These princes are said to have been speedily summoned by Daśaratha for discussing the coronation of Rāma in the Sabhā. Again, Vasiṣṭha is said to have informed Sumantra that Rājānaḥ were waiting with the Brāhmaṇas and others at the palace for the coronation ceremony (I—14—41).

Before crowning Rāma as Yuvarāja or Heir Apparent, Daśaratha obtained the approval and sanction of the Sabhā (II—2—15). A similar custom prevailed amongst the Vānaras also. After the supposed death of Vāli, Sugriva was elected king by all the ministers (IV—9—21). As another instance, might be quoted, the story of King Nṛga who after being cursed by two Brāhmaṇas, called together all his ministers, and recommended to the Sabhā (consisting of ministers, citizens, priests, officials, etc.) his son as his successor (VII—54—5, etc.). Again when Bharata went to the forest to fetch Rāma, he requested Rāma to be crowned by all the subjects, priests, purohitas and citizens (II—106—25), i.e., the different units of the Sabhā. Bharata was accompanied during this expedition by the representatives of all classes of subjects, the merchant guilds, soldiers, councillors and members of the Sabhā (II—83—1, etc.).



*Primogeniture:* As has been already stated the succession of the eldest son to the throne of the father, unless he was disqualified, was the recognised rule. The Yuvarāja's post was offered by the King to the first-born son of the first queen or Mahiṣī (belonging to the Kṣātriya caste and having an equal status with the king). The son must be a prince qualified to succeed, by his virtues and education (II-3-39). When Daśaratha in anticipation of his speedy death, summoned an urgent session of the Sabhā, he recommended to them his eldest son Rāma who was well qualified, as the Heir-Apparent. In his altercation with Kaikeyī, he repeatedly stated that the rule amongst the Ikṣvāku kings was the succession of the eldest son to the throne of his father. Kaikeyī herself told her hand maiden Mantharā that Rāma as the eldest son was certainly entitled to succeed Daśaratha (II-8-14). Mantharā also was aware of the usual method of succession (II-8-23). Bharata, true to the traditions of his race, told his mother Kaikeyī that the kingdom legitimately belonged to Rāma, the eldest son, according to law (II-73-) and not to himself. He refused to accept the kingdom offered by the ministers and the Sabhā and promised to go to the forest and bring back Rāma the legitimate king (II-79-7. etc. and II-82-13). Bharata when told by Rāma to assume the sovereignty, told him that the younger son could never inherit during the lifetime of the elder (II-101-2). When pressing Rāma to come back from Citrakūṭa, Vasiṣṭha also (II-110-32) stated that the rule amongst the Ikṣvāku princes was to crown the eldest son as King. Daśaratha and his Sabhā of course fully recognised this law of primogeniture (II-2-11, etc., and II-3-2). The kingdom passed from father to son and never from brother to brother, as was fondly hoped by Kaikeyī who desired to recognise the traditional right of Rāma to succeed first, but wished to see Bharata also as king, sometime later (II-8-22, etc.) Rāvaṇa also recognised this tradition, when he told Sītā that her husband Rāma was a foolish coward in renouncing his birthright to succeed to the throne, to please a mere woman (Kaikeyī).

*Exception to the rule:* As Asamañja, one of the ancestors of Rāma and the eldest son of Sagara was an idiot who used to kidnap the children in the streets and throw them into the

river, his father had to disinherit him at the request of his subjects and to banish him to the forest (II—36—16, 19, etc.). Kaikeyī quoted this instance as a precedent when she ordered Daśaratha to banish Rāma the eldest son and crown her son Bharata.

*Ēlection of the Yuvarāja:* Though it was the rule for the eldest son (unless disqualified) to succeed, the consent and approval of the Sabhā (*i. e.*, election by the Sabhā) was, as already stated, necessary before he could be crowned. The nomination of a particular individual as his successor by the King must be followed by the approval of the people through their representative assembly—the Sabhā. Daśaratha after expressing his desire to be relieved of his burden of kingship, proposed the election of Rāma as his successor. As he might be considered to be prejudiced in favour of his first son, he submitted the question of succession to the Sabhā. He requested the Sabhā to suggest alternative names if his proposal be not approved (II—2—8). Rāma, being highly qualified, was of course elected by the Assembly. (In the absence of a son, the king's brother was nominated Yuvarāja) (VI—131—90.)

*Vānara Custom of Succession:* The Vānara custom in the matter of succession to the throne was similar to the custom of the Ikṣvāku princes. Vāli being the first son was elected king after the death of his father (IV—9—3 IV—24—14.) Ṛkṣarāja, Sugrīva, brother of Vāli, was prospective Crown Prince after Vāli's accession to the throne of Kiṣkindhā; and Angada, the nephew of Sugrīva and son of Vāli, the previous king, was crowned Yuvarāja when Sugrīvā ascended the throne.

The Rākṣasa custom was also similar. Rāvaṇa was the eldest in his family.

*Crown Prince or Yuvarāja:* The prince who was crowned as Yuvarāja or Crown Prince automatically succeeded to the throne on the death of the King (IV—9—3). The Crown Prince (Yuvarāja) was crowned as such, during the time of the reigning monarch, to avoid an interregnum after the death of the king, and to avoid disputes about the succession.



*Rāja-kartārah or King Makers and Interregnum:* During an interregnum, the necessary arrangements for the election of a King were made by the Rāja-kartārah.<sup>1</sup> After the death of Daśaratha, the Brāhmaṇ counsellors (who were the Rāja-kartārah), the Cabinet ministers and the chief Purohita met together and discussed the situation arising out of the king's death (II-67-2, etc.). Vasiṣṭha, the chief minister, with the approval of the Cabinet (II-68-4) urgently sent for Bharata, the next brother of Rāma and asked him in the name of the Sabhā to take charge of the kingdom, which had been renounced formally by Rāma (II-34-54). Bharata unwilling to succeed unlawfully, went over with the queens, citizens, Sabhā members and purohita to Rāma in the forest and begged him to take charge of the kingdom. As Rāma refused to return on account of his promise to their father, and to Kaikeyī, and as Bharata was unwilling to be crowned as king, Bharata acted as a Regent for 14 years and administered the kingdom of Ayodhyā in the name of Rāma. (It is interesting to note that, when Bharata handed over the kingdom at the end of the Regency to Rāma, he requested Rāma to examine the treasury, and the army and inspect the city (VI-130-52).

*Regency:* If a new king could not be crowned immediately after the death of the former ruler, a Regent had to be appointed. When Daśaratha died suddenly and when Rāma was unwilling to return from the forest, Bharata acted as Regent for 14 years as mentioned above.

*Unanimity necessary when the kingdom was offered by the Sabhā, etc:* When the kingdom was not directly inherited by the Crown Prince it was offered to the prince selected, with the unanimous consent of the subjects, queens, ministers, officials, and priests. When Daśaratha died, the kingdom of Ayodhyā was offered to Bharata by the ministers, the Srenis, and the Pariṣad (Representative Assembly) (II-79-4 and 17). Again when Bharata offered the kingdom to Rāma in the forest, he did so in the name of himself,

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<sup>1</sup> The ministers of the Cabinet who were mainly responsible for the submission of names to the Sabhā for election as king were called the Rāja-kartārah (II-67-2) and II-79-1).

subjects, queens, ministers, and officials, as Rāma had renounced his right to the kingdom previously and was not entitled to resume it (II—104—9, etc.).

*Coronation as Crown Prince:* After the prince was elected Crown Prince by the Sabhā, he was crowned as Yuvarāja. After the election of Rāma as Crown Prince, Daśaratha ordered his ministers and Purohita to make all the necessary preparations for the coronation of Rāma as Yuvarāja.

It has already been noted that when the king had no son at the time of election of his successor, the next brother was crowned Yuvarāja as in the case of Sugrīva and Bharata was crowned as Yuvarāja after Rāma's coronation (Paṭṭābhiṣeka) (VI—131—90) as Rāma had no son at that time.

*Coronation as King necessary before succession:* Though crowned as Yuvarāja, the Crown Prince had to be crowned as king later on, when the reigning king died. Sugrīva, the Yuvarāja during Vāli's lifetime, was crowned as king after Vāli's death (IV—26—37). Aṅgada who was crowned as Yuvarāja (IV—26—36) at the time of Sugrīva's coronation, was subsequently crowned as king when Sugrīva abdicated in order to follow Rāma to Heaven (VII—108—23). It may be noted in passing that the coronation of the Crown Prince as king later on, did not require any further sanction by the Sabhā.

*Rights of the eldest son how asserted:* If the eldest son be not disqualified in any way and if his claims be overlooked the following remedies could be adopted:

(1) One was the remedy suggested by Lakṣmaṇa to Rāma — to fight his way to the throne and kill the unjust king (II—21—12, etc.). Kauśalyā did not disapprove of this drastic remedy but drew Rāma's attention to his brother's speech. Rāma advised Lakṣmaṇa not to act according to Kṣattrā Dharma (usage of Kings) but to act according to the Code of General Morality (Universal Dharma) and obey the father's injunctions. It should be observed that Rāma did not say that Lakṣmaṇa's suggestion was against Kṣattriya usage (II—21—44).



(2) A second course was suggested by Daśaratha himself. He told Rāma that he would do well to imprison him and assume the reins of government (II—34—26).

(3) Another remedy was suggested by the Purohita Vasiṣṭha and the citizens. The ministers and the army and the citizens could be won over and made to depart from the city, in order to found a new kingdom (II—33—17 ff. and II—37—25 f).

These measures were evidently not unknown or unusual.

*Coronation and Sacrifices:* None of the sacrifices (Yajñas mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa was a political ritual.) All the sacrifices—Rājasūya, Aśvamedha and Vājapeya, were performed solely with the object of obtaining religious merit. It would appear that the Vedic significance of these sacrifices had become lost at the time of the epic. The Rājasūya was not the inauguration ceremony of a monarch during the Rāmāyaṇa period though it was so in the Vedic period.<sup>1</sup> No doubt in one context, there is a hint of a connection between the coronation and the Rājasūya sacrifice. When Rāma was sent for by Daśaratha and Kaikeyī, Sītā accompanied her departing husband as far as the gate, wished him good luck and prayed that the king might order the Rājasūya Abhiṣecam of Rāma, as in the case of Indra (II—16—22). She was evidently not aware that the ancient custom had fallen into disuse.

Be it noted that the sacrifice was not performed by Rāma in connection with his coronation. It was thought of by him, only after reigning for a long time, on account of its religious merit. The same view should be taken in the case of Daśaratha's sacrifices. He is referred to by Rāma as the performer of many Rājasūya and Aśvamedha sacrifices (II—100—8). If the Rājasūya was an inauguration ceremony what was the necessity to perform many of them later on? The

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<sup>1</sup> Rama in proposing its performance told his brothers, that Mitra obtained sovereignty of Varunatva, by performing it, and that Soma attained great fame by its performances in Vedic times (VII—83—5, etc.)

Vājapeya<sup>1</sup> sacrifice also was not of any political significance. Rāma performed many a Vājapeya (VII—99—9).

If there be any relation between the Imperial Sovereignty and the sacrifice there was no necessity for repetition. As Brāhmaṇas also had the right of performing Vājapeya (II—45—22) the political significance of the sacrifice must have been entirely lost during the Rāmāyaṇa period. We may therefore safely infer that the Vedic period was separated from the Rāmāyaṇa period by a long interval.

*Age at the time of Coronation as Yuvarāja:* Rāma was 16 years of age (I—20—2) when going out with Viśvāmītra, before his marriage; and he is said to have lived happily with Sītā for 12 years, before the Coronation was suggested (III—47—4). Therefore he must have been 28 years of age when he was elected as Yuvarāja. Bharata who was actually crowned as Yuvarāja by Rāma, at the time of Rāma's coronation as king, was evidently 42 years of age (28 *plus* 14 years of regency).

*Divinity of Kings:* Though the kings had to be elected by their subjects through their representatives, the office of the king was deemed divine. Rāma told Vāli that kings were divine and could neither be slighted nor injured (IV—18—42). Rāvaṇa told Mārīca that kings had to be respected by people under all circumstances (III—40—12, etc). The king was supposed to represent five Gods—Agni, Sōma, Indra, Varuṇa and Yama, and he was believed to partake of their characteristics. He represented Agni in his fierceness, Indra in boldness and prowess, Sōma in kindness and gentleness, Varuṇa in the speedy administration of justice and punishment and Yama in grace.

When Rāma visited Daṇḍakāraṇya, the ascetics of that place told him that the King represented one-fourth part of

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<sup>1</sup> The Śrutis mention three sacrifices—the Rajasuya for the inauguration of a king, the Vajapeya for consecrating a king and the Sarvamedha 'a sacrifice for universal rule.' The Vajapeya probably did not partake of a political significance in its origin, it being primarily designed to celebrate something like an occasion of victory. It was later on, adopted for royal and religious consecrations. The normal ceremony of coronation, was however, the Rajasuya. The Vajapeya can be regarded as a preliminary to the Rajasuya—Vide Jayaswal, Hindu Polity, ch.xxiv, p.14 f.).



the celestial Indra (III-1-18). Kings were held in great esteem by the Brāhman ascetics. Sage Agastya narrated to Rāma (VII-76-43, etc.) that when Brahmā created the first king, he endowed him with the attributes of the Lokapālas, namely the Gods protecting the quarters—Indra, Varuna, Kubera and Yama. The king was supposed to rule with the Indra portion (amśa), nourish the people with the Varuṇa portion, give gifts with the Kubera portion and administer criminal justice with the Yama portion. Thus they were considered to be of divine origin.

*Loyalty:* Loyalty to the king has always been characteristic of the Hindus from time immemorial. Rāma told Sītā (II-26-34, etc.) that kings should never be offended but should be propitiated by serving with assiduity, as they were easily displeased by disobedience. Kings could banish even their own sons if they offended, and patronize able and favourable strangers. In Rāma's opinion, obedience rendered to the king should not be inconsistent with Dharma (Law).

*Vālmīki's ideal King:* Vālmīki's ideal of a king was that he should be one endowed with prowess, and conversant with Dharma (Duty) and righteousness. He should be grateful, truthful, true to his vow, of good character, seeker of the welfare of all creatures, learned, able, handsome, free from malice, terrible in battle and of restrained senses (I-1-2).

*Nārada's ideal King:* Nārada's description of an ideal king as illustrated in the case of Rāma, might be classified under three heads. (a) physical qualities, (b) intellectual qualities, and (c) moral qualities.

(a) The physical qualities to be possessed by an ideal king were as follows: broad shoulders, long and big arms, a conch-shaped neck with triple folds, broad and well-developed chest, collar bones covered with flesh and fat, beautiful head, high and broad forehead, large eyes, perfect symmetry of the limbs and a smooth complexion (I-1-9, etc.).

(b) The intellectual qualities expected of an ideal prince were that he should be intelligent, eloquent, learned and brave. He should be possessed of great powers of concentra-

tion and have a perfectly trained and well-balanced mind. He should be well-versed in the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Dhanurveda or military science, Rājanīti or political science and other sciences, and the arts of the day. He should have a good memory and a quick perception of truth (I—1—8 ff: I—1—14 ff.).

(c) The moral qualities expected of an ideal king (I—1—12, etc.) were that he should be learned in morality or moral science and endowed with patience. He should have all the senses under perfect control. He should be conversant with duty and be clean in body and mind. He should be truthful, merciful and charitable. He should always associate with only virtuous people.

*Hanumān's ideal King:* Hanumān's ideas of an ideal king might be considered to be the ideas prevalent amongst the Vanaras also (V—35—8, etc.). The king should be good-looking, intelligent, merciful and of a good character. He should be invincible, and capable of protecting his subjects. He should always be attached to Dharma and should never swerve from his duty of maintaining the members of the four Varṇas in their respective duties. He should be proficient in the Vedas, Vedāṅgas and Dhanurveda. He should be conversant with politics and procedure. He should be humble and worship the Brāhmaṇas. He should have a beautiful face, a powerful and resonant voice, a smooth complexion, a well-formed and symmetrical body (as described in the Sāmudrika Śāstra) (for details see V—35—17, etc.). An ideal king should be truthful and kind to everybody. He should know when to take and when to give.

*People's view of an ideal King:* According to the people's opinion, he should be brave, attached to truth and duty, intelligent, patient, of good conduct and character, free from envy, tolerant, forgiving, grateful, firm in will, of subdued senses, soft and sweet in speech, respectful to learned Brahmanas, free from calumny, learned in all the Sastras, skilful in warfare, learned in the Vedas and Vedangas, learned and proficient in fine arts, music, dancing, etc., saintly, magnanimous, ever-victorious in war, always interested in the welfare of the citizens and their families, of a smiling countenance, skilled in archery, skilful in speech, resourceful in discussions, handsome, brave, learned in the art



of ruling, never led by the senses, and always ready to oblige others. He should be munificent and popular with the subjects. He should be a strict and impartial administrator of justice. He should neither punish the innocent nor excuse the guilty. He should be a skilful warrior and strong in alliance with the kings. He should be wealthy, truthful and zealous in the performance of religious sacrifices (II—2—28, etc.).

*Education of Princes.* Rāma's education will serve as a type of the education given to the Princes in the epic period. The aim was to enable them to properly perform their royal functions. Rāma had two preceptors, Sudhanvā who gave instruction in the military science and art (II—100—14) and Suyajña, son of Vasiṣṭha, who taught the Vedas and sciences (II—31—37).

Rāma was trained in:

Elephant-riding and horse-riding, driving of war chariots, and archery (Dhanurveda) (I—18—24).

Hunting on horseback (I—18—28).

The use of the bow and the sword (II—1—20).

Sports and physical culture; breaking and training of horses and elephants (II—1—28).

Military tactics both when leading armies and when fighting battles (II—1—29).

The science and art of music (II—2—34).

The science of polity (V—35—13).

The recitation of the Vedas (I—18—33).

The Vedāṅgas (Phonetics, Prosody, Etymology, Grammar, Astronomy and Ritual (V—35—14).

All the known sciences and arts, and the literature of the day (II—1—27).

He went through a regular and complete course of study as a Brahmacārin on the traditional lines, and was thoroughly disciplined by the learned preceptors (II—1—20). Special emphasis was laid on skill in Dhanurveda or archery. The ancient Hindu princes were very famous for their skill in archery.

King Daśaratha was celebrated for his ability to shoot at invisible foes, and locate them by mere sound. This skill was spoken of as Śabdavedhitvam. Rāma was also famous as a Śabdavedhin, or one who shoots at invisible objects after spotting the objects by the sound. In fighting with Tāḍakā, he used this special skill (I-26-24).

*Political training of the Crown Prince:* The Heir-Apparent was associated with the senior military officers so that he might be familiar with military operations. Sugrīva told his Commander-in-Chief Nīla that the Heir-Apparent Aṅgada must be associated with Jāmbavān and other senior military officers during the mobilisation of the troops (IV-29-33). The Crown Prince Rāma, after his marriage, helped the king, his father, in the administration of the State and the Palace (I-77-25 etc.). He was also asked to conduct various military expeditions (II-2-35). This political training was in anticipation of his coronation, as he was expected to succeed Daśaratha. The standard aimed at, is given in full, in the first Canto of Book II.

*Marriage of Princes:* The princes were married after the completion of their studies and military training (I-18-31 and 34 f.). The Crown Prince could not be married without the consent of the Cabinet (I-68-16 etc.).

*Recreation of Kings—Hunting:* Hunting was a royal pastime. Rāma (II-49-15 etc.), Daśaratha (II-63-21 etc.), Rāvaṇa (VII-12-3), and King Ilā (VII-87-8) were all fond of hunting. Rāma wondered on leaving the frontier of Kosala when he would again hunt in the forest adjoining the river Sarayū. Rāma was evidently fond of the sport, but at the same time he was conscious of the cruelty involved, since he apologetically stated that he was desirous of only a moderate amount of sport, and that a relish for hunting was sanctioned and approved by royal sages. He referred to hunting as a legitimate sport of kings (IV-18-37, etc.). Rāma's description of hunting is a graphic picture of the ghastliness of the sport as conducted. Rāma told Vālī that hunters could hunt the game openly or covertly with net, noose and trap, and that they could shoot in the open field or hide themselves and shoot any number of animals without mercy, though the



poor innocent animals may be terribly frightened, and run in distress. Rāma's arguments to justify hunting are the very arguments to condemn hunting as a merciless ghastly crime. Rāma thought that the rules of civilised warfare did not apply to the innocent, helpless and weaker beings. Rama's partial disapproval is justified by the actions of King Ila (VII-87-8 etc.). The latter was never satisfied with his bag. The more he hunted and killed, the more insatiate he was.

Wild beasts were hunted with arrows. Deer were caught by nets or shot with arrows. Noose (or *Ḍasso*) and traps were also used (IV-18-37 ff.).

*Hunting with Dogs:* The kings of Kēkaya used to keep a special breed of huge dogs for hunting, bred in the palace, equal in strength and ferocity to tigers, and with powerful dreadful fangs (II-70-23). In III-55-5, Sītā in the power of Rāvaṇa and surrounded by the Rākṣasi guards, is compared to a female deer that had strayed from the herd and was surrounded by hunting dogs.

The kings used to divert themselves also with the usual popular recreations such as music and dancing (IV-33-20, V-10-32, etc., VII-42-20, etc.), and with jests and stories (II-69-4 and VII-43-1).

*King's palace:* The palace of the king (Rāja-veśma) was known as the 'Prāsāda'. It was constructed many storeys high (II-15-32). It was also called a Vimāna or many-storied building (II-2-18). It must have been placed in the centre of the city (or fort). The roads leading from the palace to the city were the Rāja-mārgas or the main roads, usually lined by the mansions of the nobles, the shops and the bazaars (IV-33-5, etc.). The palace itself had many concentric courtyards, fitted with gates at the entrances. The palace of Ayodhyā had five courtyards outside the set of inner apartment or residential quarters—Antaḥpura (II-17-20). One could drive through the three outer courts, but had to walk through the other courts.

The Antaḥpura or the residential quarters must have contained three compartments, as Sumantra is described as

crossing seven courts (Kakṣās) (II—57—17). The outer courts were occupied evidently by the soldiers, the stables, stores, officers' quarters, servants' quarters, etc. [Sugrīva's palace had seven courtyards outside his Zenana (IV—33—18). Lakṣmaṇa had to cross seven courts before reaching the women's quarters of Sugrīva.

The three inner courts only were occupied by the King. The outermost of these three was called the IBāhya-kakṣā (VII—37—14). The King's Audience Chamber or Sabhā, in which he transacted public business was situated in this court (evidently in the front verandah) of the first floor.

The next inner court was the Madhya-kakṣā (VII—42—36) in which the king transacted his private and confidential business with spies, ministers, brothers, etc. The innermost court was the zenana proper, occupied by women, to which only the kings, the eunuchs, the harem-guards and the female servants had access. To this court was attached the aśoka park for the recreation of women (VII—42—1 and 27; VII—36—61). The women had no access to the two outer courts. All these three courts were traversed on foot by all.

The chapels and fire worshipping rooms and the different quarters for the queens were all in the innermost compartment of the Antaḥpura, which formed the living or residential quarters of the King. During the coronation and other ceremonies, the musicians, dancing girls and the invited company, were accommodated in the middle kakṣā (II—3—16). All the courts were very vigilantly guarded. Kings had to be very careful in the selection of domestic servants.

*Door-Keeper of the Palace—Pratihāra-Dvāra-pālaka:* The door-keeper of the palace had to be a clever and bold person and a man of character. He had to be well versed in politics and capable of reading the emotional expressions on the face of people (VII—1—10), so that mischief-makers or the agents of the enemy kings might not find entrance inside.

*Quarters for princes:* The princes were all provided with separate quarters at a distance from the palace. The palace of



Rāma when he was Crown Prince, was far from the king's and he had to drive a fairly long distance to his father's palace through the main roads (II-17-2). Rāma's brothers Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna had also separate palaces (VII-44-5, etc.). In Daśaratha's time all the princes are described as living each in his own palace (svaṃ svaṃ gṛhaṃ kubera-bhavanōpamaṃ-I-77-14) and as provided with wealth (sa-dhanāḥ-I-77-15 f.).

### DUTIES OF KINGS.

*Public interest consideration of kings:* Kings were expected to prefer the public interest and the welfare of the subjects, to personal considerations. They had to be prepared even to banish the Crown Prince if he be sinful. King Sagara who was ever intent on the welfare of his subjects, banished the Crown Prince for misbehaviour. Even a beloved wife was not spared. Rāma also banished his dear wife Sītā, in order to satisfy the public. The kings generally bowed to public opinion.

*King — The protector of the realm:* The king was considered to be the protector of all his subjects. The king should practise Dharma, by the proper administration of justice. It was the duty of the king to see that all the four varṇas performed their respective duties (I-6-19, V-35-11, VI-131-101). The king was bound to protect the people as he received 'Baliṣaḍbhāga' (one-sixth of the profits or produce) as taxes from his people (III-6-11, etc.). As the king was further entitled to one-sixth of the merits of the virtuous deeds of the sages, who lived on fruits and roots, his protection extended to the sages, and ascetics in the forests also. The devolution of one-sixth part of their merit to a good king was the tax paid by the moneyless ascetics to the king (VII-74-28, etc.).

Charity, kindness, honour to the pious and the deserving, straightforwardness, and impartial justice, were expected from a king, as kingdoms could be acquired and maintained only by justice and righteousness (VII-59 L-14).

*King Dasaratha and his conception of duty:* Kings were expected to be modest and to control their senses. They should avoid the vices that would spring from lust and anger, and avoid gambling and women. They should win the love of the ministers and the subjects, fill the treasury with gold, store the arsenals with arms, and make the subjects happy (II-3-42, etc.). The king's conduct should be exemplary (II-109-9) as the subjects would surely follow in his footsteps. It was obligatory on the part of the king to lead an exemplary life and set up a high standard of conduct.

*Vānara Vāli on king's duties:* It would be interesting in this connection to note Vāli's conception of the king's duties. Vāli told Rāma that the royal virtues consisted in prudence, restraint of the passions and in rightly meting out reward and punishment. Kings should not follow their whims and pleasures. Kings should not be capricious. They should not be too ready to kill people. They should be attached to Dharma (IV-17-32, etc.).

*Sages on the duty of kings:* The Sages of the Daṇḍaka forest pointed out to Rāma (III-1-17) that the king was the administrator of justice, the protector of his subjects, their preceptor in conduct and character, and the punisher of the delinquent—wherever his subjects may be living—in towns, villages or forests.

*Punishment of the wrong-doers, A duty of kings:* It was held that kings would attain heaven by the proper administration of justice. They should never punish innocent people; but they were bound to award punishment to the offenders (VII-79-8, etc.).

*King to avoid himsā:* Kings should not do anything injurious to the people (VII-83-20). Lakṣmaṇa once pointed out to Rāma that kings were not justified in inflicting punishment on many for the sake of one, or a few culprits (III-65-9), and Rāma agreed to the proposition.

*Kings to be just:* They should not sacrifice duty or righteousness for the sake of wealth. Neither should they spend all the wealth in religious duties, and leave nothing to



protect their families. They should not sacrifice duty and wealth for the sake of enjoyment.

*Aim at popularity:* Kings should aspire for the blessings and good wishes of all their subjects.

*Personal attention of kings to state affairs:* Kings were expected to personally attend to the administration of justice. Hanumān found fault with Sugrīva for leaving the administration in the hands of the Mantrins or Ministers, and neglecting to give audience even to the ministers (IV—29—5, etc.).

*Daily routine of kings:* Kings must wake up in time (before dawn) and ponder over the day's business. The king's daily routine is well illustrated by that of Rāma.

Early morning the king was roused from slumber by the bards and minstrels (II—88—8 and VII—37—2, etc.) with music and panegyric. On waking the king took his bath, had his toilet and then performed the fire worship in the chapel (Agni-āgāra). He then worshipped the family idol in the chapel and subsequently worshipped the Devas, the Pitṛs and the Vipras (Brāhmaṇās).<sup>1</sup>

After doing all this, Rāma is said to have gone into the Bāhya-kakṣā or the outer court or compartment for the transaction of public business (VII—37—14, etc.). Rāma attended the Royal Court with the Counsellors, Purohīts, Ṛtviks, Military Officers, Country Officers or Village Officers, brothers, Princes, Ṛṣis, the city Elders, and the members of the aristocracy. He listened to learned discourses on Dharma by Sages, when not occupied with Royal duties (i.e., Public affairs or State affairs—Paura-kārya or Paurajana-kāryam—VII—53—4 and 6). As already pointed out, Kings had to attend to State affairs in person every day (VII—53—6 and 18).

Rāma is said to have spent the after-noon with his wife Sītā in the Aśokavana attached to the Zenana (VII—42—27),

<sup>1</sup> Dasaratha used to have a breakfast after the morning toilets (II—65—7, etc.). Ravana used to have his drink immediately on rising (V—18—13). He must have been in the habit of taking a breakfast of meat early morning as references to the cutting up of meat for the Pratarasana are to be found (V—22—9).

the innermost compartment to which males had no access. He spent the rest of the day in the middle compartment or *Madhya-kakṣā* to which males had access, in listening to jesters, story tellers, spies, etc. (VII-42-36 and VII-43-1, etc.).

*Darśan of Kings:* Kings must daily exhibit themselves in full dress, to the people every morning, so that they could all see him seated in the *Sabhā* (Audience Hall).

*King, Daily audience to the Public:* Kings should give public audience daily to the subjects in the presence of priests and counsellors in order to administer justice. They should be easy of access to all the subjects (VII-60-2). All men and women should have the right of free access to the kings in the mornings for preferring complaints (VII-53-6).

*Kings considered responsible for the sins and calamities of the Subjects:* king was held responsible for all the sins and crimes of his subjects. If he did not prevent his subjects from crime and unrighteousness, he would have to go to hell after death (VII-74-28).

*King's duty to an invaded Country:* When a country was conquered by vanquishing its ruler, it was the duty of the conqueror to arrange for the stable government of the conquered country (VII-62-17).

*Kings not to accept Gifts:* Kings could not receive gifts from anybody. They could only give (VII-76-33, etc.). When Agastya offered a celestial jewel as a gift, Rāma declined to take it on the ground that a *Kṣātriya* could never receive a gift. It is needless to point out that this tradition was an excellent one. It prevented extortion and corruption on the part of the constitutional monarchs.

*Restraint of unrighteous Kings:* Kings were kept in the path of righteousness by the training and education received when young, the advice and restraint of ministers, purohīts, and elders;<sup>1</sup> their respect for religion; the fear of committing sinful acts, for which they were sure of being punished in the next world; the respect for precedents and traditions, the fear

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III-100-27, III-41-6; etc.; IV-29-5; etc.; See also under Ministers.



of being attacked, vanquished and deposed or slain by other powerful kings, (to cite an instance, Lavaṇāsura, king of Mathurā, was vanquished by Satrugṇa under Rāma's orders, and his kingdom was annexed to Rāma's territory— (VII—62—6 and VII—63—17)<sup>1</sup> and the fear of public opinion and public contempt. (Sagara banished his idiot son on account of this fear) The people could express their contempt for the king guilty of an unrighteous act. The king was not considered so sacred as to be immune from popular condemnation when he acted unrighteously. When Sītā was about to put on the bark dress (when setting out for the forest to accompany Rāma), the people showed their wrath and exclaimed: "Fie on thee, Daśaratha! Brāhmaṇas should never dwell in an unrighteous kingdom" (II—35—11). The citizens of Ayodhyā, who strongly resented the treatment of Rāma by Daśaratha and Kaikeyī, threatened to desert Ayodhyā and pack off to the forest with all their belongings 'money and grain', forsaking their houses, fields and gardens (II—33—16, etc.). The desertion of a city by the inhabitants is certainly a severe form of punishment for the king.

Sumantra frightened Kaikeyī by saying that she would incur public odium, if she persisted in her evil resolve (II—35—32). Infamy, disgrace and contempt of the people on account of injustice to his son, were dreaded by king Daśaratha when banishing Rāma (II—12—93). He was afraid that people would scoff at him for buying sexual pleasure by sacrificing his son to the whims of his wife (II—12—62, 76, 81 and 93). Daśaratha told Kaikeyī that if his decree to crown Rāma, made in the presence of the princes and the assembly members be set aside, he would be taken for an imbecile even if he were to tell the story of his boons to Kaikeyī.

Public scandal was thus dreaded by righteous kings. After the slaughter of Rāvaṇa, Rāma was unwilling to take back Sītā who had lived in Rāvaṇa's house for a long time—a residence attended with many risks of ravishment (VI—118—19, etc.). Rāma told his brothers before finally banishing

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the action of the Government of India in the case of misruled Indian States.

Sītā, that he was smarting under the public calumny in the town and the country (VII—45—3). He told them that he was prepared to sacrifice his life and even his brothers, and much more so his wife in order to avoid infamy and scandal (VII—45—14). Vibhīṣaṇa pointed out to Rāvaṇa that the killing of the envoy (ambassador), Hanumān, would be a public scandal (V—52—6).

*Precedents, A guide to Kings:* Kings were often guided in the administration by precedents. Viśvāmitra told Rāma that the killing of a woman might be necessary and justifiable in the interests of the state and quoted two precedents.

1. The killing of the wife of Bhrgu (and mother of Sukṛa) by Viṣṇu in the interests of humanity and

2. the killing of Mantharā (daughter of Virocana) by Indra for the benefit of the world (I—25—19 f.).

Kaikeyī quoted the precedents of Sagara, Śibi, etc., to convince Daśaratha, that truthful kings should keep their promises. Rāma quoted as a precedent, the punishment of an adulterous monk by his ancestor Māṇdhātā to justify his action in killing Vāli (IV—18—33). Indrajit told Hanumān who protested against his attempt to kill Māyā Sītā that Rāma himself had set an example by killing the woman Tāḍakā (VI—81—30).

*The King's Happiness in brief:* The happiness of the kings consisted in the welfare of his subjects and himself, his friends and relations, in the possession of a full treasury, in the submission of the neighbouring kings, in the conquest of enemies and in the due performance of religious rites. These are the points about which Viśvāmitra made enquiries when he entered the presence of Daśaratha to ask for the help of Rāma (I—18—41, etc.).

*Kings not to leave the kingdom without making proper arrangements:* The king could not leave the kingdom without making adequate arrangements for the conduct of administration. Before setting out for the forest for penance, Bhagīratha placed the kingdom in charge of his ministers who acted as regents. After the descent of Gaṅgā and the completion of the Śrāddha ceremonies of his Pitr̥s, he



resumed charge of the government (I-42-11 and I-44-18). When Rāma went out in the Puṣpaka aerial car in search of the Śūdra ascetic, he placed the city in charge of Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata (VII-75-9). The Crown Prince could not leave the territory without the permission of the king—"Why did you come to the forest here, while the king is living?" said Rāma to Bharata (II-100-4), when he met him in Cītrakūṭa, (Rāma was not aware of the death of Daśaratha).

It was the custom of the Ikṣvāku princes after reigning for many years, to install their eldest sons as kings, and retire to the forest to lead the life of a hermit or Vānaprastha. (Lakṣmaṇa alludes to this custom in (II-23-25 f.). To cite an instance, Aṁśumān handed over the kingdom after an illustrious reign to his son Dilīpa and retired to the forest.

*King's retirement, Sanction by the Assembly:* If kings wished to retire and hand over the kingdom to a successor they had to obtain the sanction of the Sabhā or the Representative Assembly. King Daśaratha convened a meeting of the Sabhā and requested the Assembly to relieve him of the burden of ruling Ayodhyā, as he had grown old, and as a highly qualified successor was available in the person of Rāma, his eldest son (II-2-6, etc.).

Similarly king Nrga on the eve of his retirement summoned the Assembly before handing over the charge of his kingdom to his son Vasu (VII-54-5, etc.).

## THE CORONATION CEREMONY

Though there are references to the coronation ceremonies of Rāma, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa; and the sons of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna; Rkṣarāṭ, etc., the description of the ceremony itself is very meagre.

We find a few details in the descriptions of the coronations of Sugrīva and Rāma (IV-26-21, etc., and VI-131-58, etc.).

By piecing together Vasiṣṭha's preparations for the coronation of Rāma as Yuvarāja (II-3-8 and II-14-35, etc., II-15-11, etc.), the speech of Sītā on meeting Rāma who returned disappointed from Daśaratha's presence (II-26-9, etc.), and the actual coronation ceremony of Rāma (VI-131

—58, etc.), we can get some rough idea of the ceremony, during the Rāmāyana period. The ceremony was not associated with any Yajna or sacrifice. As already pointed out, Śītā was mistaken in calling the coronation, Rājasūya Abhisecam (II—16—22). Neither Sugrīva nor Rāma performed the Rājasūya at the time of the coronation. The following points may be noted in this connection.

The Purohita was in charge of all the ceremonial arrangements connected with the coronation. Water had to be procured from the four seas, the sacred rivers like the Ganges, and all the sacred pools.

The various articles necessary for oblations in the Fire (on the coronation day), for the bathing ceremony of the Prince, and for various other ceremonies were: gold, gems, sacred herbs, flowers, darbha grass, priyaṅgu seeds, leaves of lactiferous trees, garlands, parched grains, various kinds of seeds, cleaned rice grains (Akṣata), ghee, honey, curd, scents, sandal and other unguents, new white clothing fresh from the loom, sandals of pig-skin, bullhorns for sprinkling water, the royal insignia (white umbrella and white chouries), tiger skin, the gold-plated coronation stool or Bhadra-pītha for sitting during the bathing ceremonies, arms, sword, arrows, bow, etc., (to be presented to the king by the priests), the coronation chariot for the procession, a palanquin, and the throne spread with tiger skin. All these had to be procured beforehand and kept ready.

Arrangements had also to be made for the presentation of gifts to innumerable Brāhmaṇas performing the Svasti-vācana ceremony, and for the attendance of musicians, chaste well-decked dancing girls, well-decked virgins (the virgins were probably worshipped by the Prince), and the four-fold army with the processional elephants, the horse in ornamental trappings and the bull with gold-tipped horns. On the day previous to the coronation, the Prince and his wife were initiated for the fasting ceremony. They observed the vow of Brahmacarya. The prince with his wife at his side performed Homa in the fire and worshipped God Nārāyaṇa. On the morning of the coronation day, Brāhmaṇas were sumptuously fed at the temples, and other public places, with rice, curd,



honey, ghee, and parched paddy or puffed rice (Lāja), etc., and presented with dakṣiṇās (money presents).

The whole city was adorned with flags and buntings, the streets were swept and scented and strewn with flowers. The houses and shops of the citizens were expected to be decked with flags, garlands and festoons.

The members of the Assembly, the leading merchants, the heads of various Guilds, the tributary kings, the ministers and civil officers, the military officers, the leading citizens or nobles, were all expected to be present at the palace before the ceremonies commenced (II-14-40 f and II-15-2). The musicians, the dancing girls, and the virgins, were seated in the middle compartment. The ceremony itself was in the Fire Hall of the Palace (Agni-āgāra) adjoining the middle compartment.

The Prince and his wife had to perform Homa in the fire placed on an altar surrounded by darbha grass, after having been blessed by the Brāhmaṇas in the Svasti-vācana ceremony. Subsequently the Prince and his wife were seated on the Bhadrāsana and bathed or sprinkled with the sacred waters, first by the Brāhmaṇas and Ṛtviks with due mantrams, secondly by the virgins, thirdly by the ministers, fourthly by the military officers, and fifthly by the Vaiśya merchants.

Subsequently the Prince had to retire and put on new silk clothing, daub on his body sandal paste, gorocanā and manaḥśilā. The Abhiṣecana was followed by the Coronation in the Sabhā Hall embellished with gold and gems, and situated in the veranda of the first floor so as to be seen by the public. The Abhiṣecana was a religious rite while the Coronation was a political and spectacular rite. The Prince with his wife was placed on a golden throne inlaid with various gems, and was crowned by the Purohita with the hereditary crown (Kīrīṭa) and adorned with the hereditary crown-jewels by the Ṛtvik priests. Then the royal white umbrella (Chattra) was held over his head while the brothers or princes fanned him with white chouries.

He subsequently received presents. He was probably also presented with the bow, arrows, sword, etc., by the Purohita.

Then came the presentation of jewels and other articles by the king to Brāhmaṇas, various officials, tributary princes and others.

After the coronation, the king was evidently set upon the Coronation Coach (the Puṣpa-ratha) and driven along the royal roads in a procession with music and all the paraphernalia of royalty, so that all the people could have a look at their new king and bless him. All the people present in the Sabhā at the time of the coronation, evidently marched in front of the king during the procession.

*Royal Processions:* During the royal processions (whether coronation processions or ordinary processions) (VI—130—2, etc. and VI—131—27, etc), the roads were kept swept, watered and fumigated with fragrant wood like Sandal and Agaru. The streets were strewn with flowers and lāṇa. All the houses on the roads used to be decked with flags and festoons and flower garland. The tops of towers, mansions, tall trees in the crossways, caityas and quadrangles were adorned with flags. The windows and the balconies of the top floors of the mansions used to be crowded with women with flowers in their hands (for showering the flowers on the prince when passing through) (II—16—37). The royal roads (*i. e.*, the roads leading from the palace) through which the procession passed, were lined by the huge mansions of the nobles and merchant princes, and various kinds of shops where all commodities could be bought— silk cloths, wool, pearls, gems and jewels, eatables of all sorts, etc. (II—17—1, etc.). They were crowded with citizens, and policemen used to keep order in the streets (VI—130—8).

Kings used to drive in gorgeous state coaches drawn by four huge and well-broken white horses with gold trappings. (II—16—28, II—14—36 and VI—11—3). The seat for the prince was covered with tiger skin. The royal standard of the Ayodhyā kings (Kovidāra dhvaja) (II—96—18) was noticeable at a great distance. The white umbrella with hundred ribs, was held over the head of the king or prince, and the white chouries or cāmaras were waved on either side. The handles of these insignia were made of gold and inlaid with gems (II—16—32, etc., VI—131—28 and VI—11—11 f.). On such



occasions the kings were accompanied by their ministers, Brāhmaṇas, purohīts, soldiers, musicians, dancing girls, bards, minstrels and citizens. The leading citizens (Śreṇi-mukhyāḥ) and members of the various guilds (Naigamāḥ) also formed part of the retinue. Caparisoned horses and elephants and soldiers in uniform with uplifted swords led the way (VI—130—11 f.).

The musicians and the dancing girls went ahead (VI—130—3). Brāhmaṇas with rice-grains, mantriṇs with garlands and modakas (a kind of sweet balls) (VI—130—16 and VI—131—38), and Brāhmaṇ girls with flowers and fruits were to be found in the procession (II—43—15 and VI—131—38). The bards and minstrels, were generally in the front of the procession (VI—130—3). The king was surrounded by soldiers both in the front and behind (II—16—35 and VI—11—6). As the procession moved along, the citizens used to scatter lāja or parched paddy, shout "Victory to the King" and bless him. The beautifully-decked women on the house-tops and balconies used to scatter flowers with their blessings (II—16—37 and II—43—13, etc.). The king returned the salutes of the people on the roads according to their status (II—17—7).<sup>1</sup>

Some of the passages describing processions in the Rāmāyaṇa, may be read with interest and compared with the present-day usages of temple processions and the processions of the Indian Princes (II—16—28, etc., VI—11—3, etc., and VI—131—27, etc.).

Before concluding the section, a brief reference might be made to the question of the king's proprietorship in the land.

*King's Proprietorship in the land:* When Rāma renounced his birthright in favour of Bharata, to save his father from a dilemma, he told Daśaratha that he gave up his claim over the city, the country and the ground or the soil, the mountains, the forests and the fields (Puram ca rāṣṭraṃ ca mahī ca kevalā mayā niṣṛṣṭā Bharatāya dīyatam; ahaṃ nideśaṃ bhavato nupālayan vanaṃ gamiṣyāmi cirāya sevitum. Mayā niṣṛṣṭāṃ

1. The rural subjects used to follow the king's car during his rural tours, out of loyalty (II—50—4 f.). It was a custom among the people to circumambulate the prince or king when driving along the roads, and prostrate themselves before his chariot (II—50—6).

Bharato mahīm imām saśailakhaṇḍām sapurām sakānanām; śivām susīmām, etc. (II—34—54 f.). The terms pura and rāṣṭra evidently connoted not the land but the enjoyment of of sovereignty rights. Rāma's list specifically included the land including the agricultural fields, hills, and forests. The special emphasis on mahīm imām points to the proprietary right of the king over all the land in his dominion.

**Sovereignty.**— The sovereignty of kings extended not merely to the city and the country but also to the forests. The ascetics in Dandaka forest told Rāma that they, though residing in the forests, were his subjects entitled to his support and protection. It is no wonder that kings claimed a right to tax the forest produce.

**Conclusion:** The foregoing survey leads to the irresistible inference that the kings of the Rāmāyaṇa period were in no way absolute or tyrannical.<sup>1</sup> They were constitutional monarchs who were more particular in the discharge of their duties than in the exercise of rights and privileges. They dared not oppose public opinion, and paternalism was the guiding principle in the discharge of their public duties.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

### RAMA'S ADVICE TO BHARATA ON ROYAL DUTIES <sup>2</sup>

Kings must respect Devas, parents, elders, learned men preceptors and the Purohīts. All the religious duties from Agnihotra to Aśvamedha should be regularly performed (II—100—11, etc.). It was the king's duty to see to the maintenance of the Varṇāśrama-dharma (the due observance of their duties by the four castes). To cite an instance, Rāma killed the Śūdra ascetic Śambukā (though perfectly innocent) for doing penance when the law of the land prohibited it in the case of the Śūdras.

Kings should humbly prostrate themselves before preceptors, aged people, sages, idols in temples, guests, Brāhmaṇas and sylvan deities. They should devote themselves

<sup>1</sup> Ravana was an exception.

<sup>2</sup> II—100—10, etc. The text should be read with the commentary of Govindaraja in order to understand the technical terms used.



to the performance of their duties, acquisition of wealth, and enjoyment of legitimate pleasures (dharma, artha and kama) in the proper season.

*Kings and Atheists:* Kings should always have an eye on atheists, as they would be sure to divert the people's attention from the study of the scriptures (which lay down the moral standards) and make the people disobey the moral laws, evolved in the course of many ages by the wisest sages.

*Kings to take care of the Economic welfare of the Community:* Kings should be specially intrested in the welfare of the merchant community, and people engaged in agriculture and cattle rearing. They should always relieve their distress and secure their welfare.

*Kings not to entrust secrets to women:* Kings should not confide secrets to women. They should not trust women or repose confidence in them.

*Kings and animal breeding:* They should look after and protect the elephant-breeding forests. Kings must be amply furnished with cows, horses, elephants and female decoy-elephants, and must have an insatiable desire to possess as many of these as possible.

*Kings and State Affairs:* The state affairs must be considered neither with one minister alone nor with too many ministers. Once having come to a conclusion, the decision must be speedily carried out and not delayed. The decisions must be such that great results follow from slight and simple efforts. The king's decisions must be known to others only after their successful execution. Nobody should be able to guess the decisions of the king or the ministers, even by inference. The king should beware of people who are crafty, resourceful, versed in politics, fond of creating disaffection amongst the king's servants, daring, or avaricious. Such people would kill the king, unless they be killed in advance.

*Vices to be avoided:* Kings should avoid the fourteen vices, viz., atheism, untruthfulness, anger, inattentiveness, procrastination, the sight of non-virtuous people, laziness, want of control over the senses, decision without consultation,

consultation with foolish ignorant ministers, slow action in matters once settled definitely, want of secrecy, omission of auspicious ceremonies, and fighting a number of enemies at the same time.

The king must equally avoid the *ten vices*, viz., excessive hunting, gambling with dice, sleeping during the day, scandal-mongering, lust, drink, excessive indulgence in music and dancing, and aimless roaming from place to place. (Avarice, anger, idleness, untruthfulness, carelessness, cowardice, inconstancy, foolishness, insult to others and injustice have also been called the *ten vices* of kings.)

*Kings to be avoided as Allies:* The king should never contract alliance with kings of twenty kinds, viz., those who are very young, or very old, chronic invalids, cowards, bullies, those who are excommunicated, those who are unpopular with their subjects, those who are excessively devoted to sexual pleasures, those who are avaricious or surrounded by avaricious people, those who are fickle, those who are cursed by sages, those who insult Brāhmanas and Dieties, those who believe in luck and do not exert themselves, those who are troubled with famine, army troubles, or too many enemies, those who do not always reside in their own country, those who are destitute of truth and righteousness and those who are unlucky.

1. *Special advice to Kings:* The king should act without prejudice to *Trivarga* or the three fundamental aims of life, viz., Dharma (righteousness), Artha (acquisition of wealth) and Kāma (enjoyment).

2. He should have the three kinds of knowledge: (a) Scriptural knowledge (Vedas or Trayī), (b) Economics (vārtā) dealing with agriculture, trade and cattle-breeding and (c) Politics (Niti or nyāya).

3. He should have control over the senses.

4. He should be familiar with the following eight: agriculture, trade, defence, bridging, catching elephants, mining, exaction of tributes and solitary places of retreat (emergency shelters).



5. The king should have a good knowledge of the five kinds of fortifications (water, hill, forests, desert, and barren soil incapable of yielding food or fodder for the enemy's army when besieging).

6. The king should also have a knowledge of the following:

(a) Mandalam or the Federal circle of which he is the overlord (the disposition and designs of the various sovereigns have to be ascertained in case of war).

(b) "Prakṛti"—ministers of the kingdom, forts, treasury and army (their condition should be known in case of war).

(c) the seven pillars of the kingdom—master, ministers, kingdom, fort, treasury; army, foes and allies.

(d) the four methods usually adopted in governing a kingdom—Sāma, Dāna, Bhēda and Daṇḍa—conciliation, gift, sowing dissensions in the enemy camp, and the use of force.

(e) Kṛtya—the art of pleasing with suitable presents, the enemy's agents and servants who have not been paid their wages, and who have been insulted, angered or frightened by their master.

(f) Śādgūṇya or six expedients in politics: Samdhi (peace), Vighraha (War), Yāna (Expeditions or marching against the foe), Āsana (halting during the expedition), Dvaidhībhāva (the sowing of dissensions in the enemy's camp), and Samāśraya (seeking the protection of a powerful king).

(g) The various dangers arising from Providence: flood, drought, fire, disease and death.

(h) The various dangers from men—robbers, enemies, favourites and avaricious people.

7. The king should know all about expeditions and marshalling of troops, e.g.:

(a) Śyena (Kite formation—rhomboid formation with extended wings).

(b) Sūcī (Needle formation, arranging a long line of troops).

(c) Vajra (Mace formation).

- (d) Śakaṭa (Wedge formation of troops).
- (e) Makara (arrangement of troops in the form of two tri-angles with apex joined).
- (f) Dāṇḍa (like a staff—oblong formation of troops).
- (g) Padma (lotus formation of troops).



## CHAPTER III

### CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

*Ideal Administration:* Under an ideal administration by a just king the country was expected to be prosperous. The following is a description of a well-governed kingdom (1—6—6 ff). During Daśāratha's rule the people were truthful, pious, learned, free from covetousness, and contented with their possessions. Every citizen was blessed with plenty of good things: corn, cows, wealth and horses. They decked themselves with garlands, jewels and perfumes and ate good rich food. People were neither lustful nor atheistical. Men and women were of excellent character, free from thievishness, meanness, and adultery. All had their senses under control, and duly performed sacrifices and other religious rites.

During Rāma's reign, it is stated that the people had no troubles from wild beasts and snakes, thieves, diseases or calamities (VI—131—95, etc.). Widows were not distressed as they found a protector in the king. There was no untimely death of young people. All the subjects were healthy, and contented. They were free from avarice or greed. They were all engaged in the due performance of the respective duties of their varṇas and āśramas. They were all truthful and pious and did not hurt each other. People took Rāma, the king, as their model. As pointed out by Rāma himself, his subjects refrained from disputes, civil as well as criminal; and protected each other on account of the fear of the righteous and stern administration of justice (VII—59K9 and 11). Rāma on meeting Bharata at Citrakūṭa, pointed out to him what a well-administered country should be like (II—100—41, etc.). The capital must be fortified with brave soldiers and be made unassailable, so that the people might be protected from foreign invasion. The four varṇas in the kingdom must be made to perform their respective duties. On account of the maintenance of peace, the country should be full of learned, contented and prosperous people living in fine mansions of various designs and worshipping the deities in the temples. The subjects should be happy, and delight in frequent festivals and conferences. They must be very much

attached to their justly administered country, filled with temples, lakes and sheds for supplying drinking water, and containing mines of silver, gold and gems. They should be unwilling to change their domicile. The irrigation channels must be well attended to. The people should have plenty of cattle and sheep, and should keep all the agricultural fields well-ploughed. The agriculturists should be free from the six pests: floods, drought, rats, locusts, parrots and foreign invasions. The country should be picturesque with parks and gardens, and free from beasts of prey, and robbers. The Brāhmaṇas should command the respect of everybody including the king; and the Vaiśyas, being under the special care of the kings (II-100-47) should be prosperous, freely carrying on their trade without fear (II-67-22).

*The Machinery of Administration:* The Central Administration was conducted by the king with the assistance of:

1. The Popular Assembly (Sabhā or Pariṣad-II-2-1).
2. The Ministers (Amātyas or Sacivas-I-7-1, etc.) —the Cabinet Ministers with portfolios, and the Mantrins or Counsellors without portfolios (I-7-4 f.).
3. The permanent higher officials (Tīrthas-II-100-36).

## THE SABHA

*Sabhā or Popular Assembly:* The description of the Popular Assembly might be taken up first as all important matters had to be discussed in this Assembly, called the Sabhā or Pariṣad, after a preliminary consultation between the King and the Amātyas. The system of conducting public administration with the help of the Popular Assembly (Pariṣad or Sabha) during the Rāmāyaṇa period was a legacy from the Vedic period.

*Various names for the Sabhā:* In the Rāmāyaṇa the terms Pariṣad (II-2-1 and VI-12-1), Samiti (VI-11-33), Saṃsad (VI-11-29 and 31) and Sabhā (II-3-35, II-81-9, II-82-3, etc. and VI-11-23 and 27) are used synonymously. The Popular or Representative Assembly was called by all these terms. It corresponded to the present day Parliament or



Legislative Assembly. The Samiti and the Sabhā were not different institutions, during the Rāmāyana period. The Assembly in Ayodhyā is called Pariṣad in II-2-1 and Sabhā in II-3-35, and II-67-2. The Assembly in Lanka is called Sabhā in VI-11-23, Saṃsad in VI-11-29 and 31, Samiti in VI-11-31 and Pariṣad in VI-12-1. Macdonell and Keith express the correct view that the Sabhā and the Samiti cannot be distinguished.<sup>1</sup>

*Sabhā or Court of Justice:* The term Sabhā was also applied to the Royal Court of Justice. Many members of the Assembly or Pariṣad probably sat in the Court of Justice, like the king, but in a different capacity (*i. e.*, Judicial and not Political).

*Sabhā or Assembly Hall or Audience Chamber:* The term Sabhā was also applied to the Chamber or Hall (II-67-2 and VI-11-9 and 23) in which the Popular Assembly met and in which the Royal Court of Justice (VII-59 K-3) also was located.<sup>2</sup>

The King sat as the President of the Assembly, on the throne Rājāsana (II-5-23) or Paramāsana (VI-11-17). When he dispensed justice he sat on the Dharmāsana, in the Royal Court (VII-59 K -1, etc). The members of the Assembly sat as the representatives (probably elected) of various classes of subjects, while the members of the Court of Justice were evidently nominated or invited to take part in the proceedings by the King, solely on account of their knowledge of law, tradition, religion, and the various branches of learning (VII-59 K-2, etc. and VII-74-2, etc.).

*Designation of the members of the Sabhā or Assembly.* The members were called Sabhā-sadaḥ (II-5-24 and II-82-17) and Āryamiśras (II-82-19). All the members of the Sabhā (officials and non-officials) were collectively called Prakṛtis (II-82-4) or Sabhāsadaḥ (II-82-17). The members had the honorific appellation Ārya (II-79-16 and II-82-1) or Āryamiśra (II-82-19) or "The Honorable". They were referred to collectively also as Āryagaṇa (II-82-1).

<sup>1</sup> *Vedic Index*, Vol. II, p. 430.

<sup>2</sup> It must be borne in mind that these terms Sabhā and Parisad were also used to indicate other assemblages (II-6-13 and 20).

This courtesy title is analogous to the titles of 'Honorable' and 'Right Honorable' of the present-day. In addressing them, the King-President used terms of respect. Daśaratha used the term of respect Bhavantaḥ (II-2-15 and 25) instead of the common term Yūvam. Even Rāvaṇa used the honorific term Bhavadbhiḥ instead of Yuṣmābhiḥ (VI-12-24).

The Assembly which is referred to as 'Pariśado Mantriṇaḥ Śreṇayas tathā'<sup>1</sup> by Bharata in II-111-24 is referred to again as "Paura Jānapada-janāḥ" when Rāma addressed it later on (II-111-27). Therefore the term Paura-jānapada must be taken to mean the Pariśad or the Representative Assembly of the city and the country (combined).

*Constitution of the Assembly or Sabhā or Pariśad:* The Assembly consisted of (A) Officials and (B) Non-Officials.

A. Officials: (1) The Ministers—Amātyas or Sacivas forming the Cabinet or Amātyagaṇa; (2) The Counsellors—consisting of Brāhmaṇ sages, two of whom were Ṛtviks or Priests; often referred to as Gurus or Dvijas or Dvijāgryas or Brāhmaṇas.

B. Non-Officials: (1) Rājānaḥ—Nobles (Kṣattriyas) and (2) Paurajānapada—the representative element in the Sabhā (probably Vaiśyas).

These Amātyas and the Counsellors together formed the body of Mantrins or the Ministry. The term Mantriṇaḥ is used by Vālmīki to denote the Counsellors (Class 2 only) in some contexts, and all the members of the Ministerial Council (consisting of the two classes A 1 and 2, in other contexts). These officials, the Amātyas and the Mantriṇaḥ were ex-officio members of the Assembly. The Rājānaḥ invited (II-1-45 and 48) by Daśaratha to attend the special session of the Pariśad were either tributary kings, or their representatives, or nobles, as they are described, as sitting with great humility in the Sabhā and as waiting at the gates of the Palace on the coronation day.

*Paura-janapada:* The Paura-janapada (II-2-19) consisted of the representatives of the citizens of the capital

<sup>1</sup>The commentator interprets Parisad as the Brahman Counsellors, and Srenyah as the Janapada.



or "Paura" and the representatives of the country (excluding the capital) or "Jānapada".

The terms 'Paura' and Jānapada' are always referred to collectively as Paura-jānapada. This body is also spoken of as consisting of Naigamas and Śreṇi-mukhyas in certain places. The term Naigama may refer to the Guilds of merchants or to the Trade Corporations, and the term Śreṇi-mukhyas may refer to the chiefs or presidents of the Trade Guilds or the City Fathers of the City Corporation.

The various corporations in the city were represented in the "Paura" or the City organisation (Bāhya or outer section). And from this body, members were probably selected for representation in the Popular Assembly. This selected body was the Paura organisation (Ābhyanantara or inner section). The Ābhyanantara "Paura" was evidently a representative organisation of the city or capital; and it looked after the political interests. The members of this inner body, the Ābhyanantara Paura (the city representatives in the Pariṣad or Sābha) co-operated with a similar body (elected by the Jānapada, or country at large) called Jānapada (Ābhyanantara). The Bāhya Jānapada was probably not one collective body but a collection of scattered units, viz. Grāmas and Ghoṣas (terms referring to the organisations) in the agricultural and pastoral villages (Grāma-saṃvāsas). The Grāma-ghoṣamahattaras were their representatives (Ābhyanantara Jānapada section of the Assembly) representing the rural parts (II—2—49 and II—83—15).

As the two political organisations the Paura and Jānapada always acted together, this twin organisation was called Paura-jānapada.

*Janapada or Mofussil Members and Quarters in the Metropolis:* The members of this body (Ābhyanantara or inner section) evidently resided in the metropolis. The jānapadas are also described as Purālayas, i. e., residents in the city (II—1—50). They evidently had to attend all the meetings of the Assembly throughout the year. Hence Vālmīki sometimes groups them under "Paura" as they were practically residents of the Pura or the metropolis and uses the word Paura instead of Paura-jānapada in some places.

**Paura:** Vālmīki, calls the same body, representing the interests of the metropolis "Paura" from a political aspect, Naigama from a commercial or social aspect, and Śreni-mukhyas from a municipal aspect. Most probably the same distinguished-Vaiśya merchants found a place in all these bodies.

The representatives in the inner or Ābhyantara section of the Jānapada also included most probably the Presidents of the Corporations of the petty mofussil towns (Nānā-nagara-vāstavyāṇ—II—1—45).

**Janapada (Bāhya):** The mofussil towns, Nagaras or Pattanaṣ were probably the trading centres for the neighbouring Grāmas and Ghōṣas. And these three units must have had separate corporate bodies to look after their local interests. The Corporations of all the mofussil villages and towns constituted the Jānapada (outer circle). The presidents of these bodies might have been ex-officio members of the Jānapada (Inner circle) attending the Assembly meetings and residing in the metropolis. We are told in the Rāmāyaṇa that the Grāma-ghoṣa-mahattaras who were residing in Ayodhyā (II—83—15) followed Bharata when he went to bring back Rāma from the forest. In the same way the Naigamas who followed Bharata to bring back Rāma (II—83—11) were really the presidents of the Town Guilds who represented the metropolis Pura, in the Śabhā. The Naigamas and Grāma-ghoṣa-mahattaras who followed Bharata, were really members of the Paura-jānapada. It may be pointed out here that Grāmasamvāsa was the term used to denote the residential quarters of the villages. The term "Grāma-samvāsas" might mean the villages; while the term Grāma might have meant the political or municipal organisations (II—49—4).

**Paura janapada and Paura sometimes Equivalent:** As king Daśaratha, seated in the Śabhā is described as consulting his Mantrins after the departure of the 'Pauras' from the Assembly Hall (where the Assembly (Pariṣad) meeting had been previously held), "Paura" might be considered as synonymous with the Paura-jānapada Assembly which had been deliberating there. The Paura-jānapadas are referred to as Pauras in II—3—48 and II—4—1. Evidently the term



'Paura' in these contexts included both the Pauras and the Jānapadas who were previously deliberating in the Pariṣad or Sabhā.

*Paura-jānapada a Representative Body:* The Paura-jānapada was the most important unit in the administration. In fact it was the deciding factor in state affairs, as it was a representative body. When Bharata wished to declare his innocence regarding Rāma's banishment, he called the Pariṣad (II-111-24) to witness. Vālmīki refers to the same body, as Paura-jānapada-jana in II-111-27, when Rāma addressed it later on. It may be pointed out here that this body claimed to represent the views of the unrepresented part of the population also,—when the question of the election of the Yuvarāja was discussed (II-2-49 and II-2-52). The technical term "Paura-jānapada" is used by Vālmīki both in the singular and the plural. In II-2-19 and 26, the Paura-jānapada section of Assembly is referred to in the plural—Paura-jānapadaḥ saha; while in II-2-49 f, the same body is referred to in the singular—Paura-jānapada-janaḥ.

Collective nouns can be used in the singular or plural. He might be thinking of the whole body or of all the members individually. Unless we interpret Paura-jānapada as the representative body there is no force in the use of the words Ābhyantara and Bāhya.

*Sabhā a Representative Body:* The Sabhā members replying to Daśaratha when he placed his proposal to elect Rāma as Yuvarāja, stated that all the king's subjects—urban as well as rural, prayed for Rāma's accession. Unless they had been representatives they could not have mentioned that their approval was in accordance with the wishes of all the people (II-2-49). Moreover, the use of the word Jana-mukhya suggests some sort of representation (II-2-19).

Though it is not clearly stated in the Rāmāyaṇa whether the members of the Paura-jānapada were nominated or elected, the use of the terms Naigamas, Grāma-ghoṣa-mahattaras, Gaṇa-vallabhas (terms referring to the heads or presidents of the various institutions or trade unions) is suggestive of some sort of election.

The business of the 'Paura-jānapada' was not confined to particular sessions as the Jānapada body resided in the metropolis (Paurālaya—II—1—50). The members probably served on many committees like the legislators of the present-day. There is no specific reference to the presence of Śūdras, in the Sabhā convened by Vasiṣṭha after Daśaratha's death (II—81—12 ff). In II—100—41, the term Ārya includes only Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and Vaisyas. Perhaps the Sabhā consisted only of Dvija members. It may be argued that negative evidence is not a sufficient proof to draw any inference. But it may be pointed out, that there is an absence of reference to the Śūdras, (though they were subjects of the king) while the other Varṇas have been specifically mentioned. Evidently they did not count much as a political factor. A question may be raised whether the Śūdras could not have been included in the Grāma-ghoṣa-mahattaras (heads of the villages) who were the popular representatives in the assembly. But, these village superiors could not have been from the Śūdra-varṇa as it is very unlikely that the members of the higher Vaiśya-varṇa would have chosen them as their heads or representatives. It is difficult to say whether the Śūdras had any direct representation in the Sabhā.

*Distinguished Visitors Attending the Sabhā:* It was evidently not unusual, to invite royal guests to the Assembly session. Prince Yudhājit, uncle of Bharata (II—81—13) was invited to attend as a distinguished guest (and as one interested in Prince Bharata) when Vasiṣṭha convened a special session to elect a successor to king Daśaratha.

*Representation of Varṇas and Interests:* The spiritual power was represented in the Assembly by the Mantrins (Brāhmaṇ sages and Purohit). The money power was represented by the Paura-jānapada, representing the Naigamas, the Gaṇa-vallabhas of the metropolis, and the Grāma-ghoṣa-mahattaras of the province. The physical power was of course represented by the king and the Rājanyas or Rājānah. Most probably the muscle power was represented in the Cabinet also, as all the Amātyas were expected to be brave and well up in military science. The Sacivas of Kārtavīrya Arjuna, Rāvaṇa, etc., fought in many battles. All



the three classes of Dvijas were thus represented. The interests of the Śūdras were probably looked after by the king as their protector.

*Territorial Representation:* There was not only Varṇa representation but also representation of areas in the Assembly. The Brāhmaṇ Sages (usually dwellers in the forests) were nominated to the Council on account of their learning. The Kṣātriyas (Rājanyas, Rājāṇaḥ), were concentrated in the capital (which was always an extensive fort) and other frontier forts. The military officers were probably ex-officio members of the Assembly to represent the military interests. The 'Paura' was mainly a body representing the interests of the Pura or the capital city and the Jānapada was a body representing the interests of the country at large. These two bodies as has already been pointed out, always acted as one body—Paura-jānapada. In the Rāmāyaṇa period, the country was divided into the metropolis (always a big fort or Pura) and the rest of the Empire—the Rāṣṭra or Jānapada. As the military forces and the wealthiest citizens were concentrated in the capital, as the king, the princes and the nobles lived there, the metropolis was treated as a separate unit by itself. The sessions of the Assembly were also held at the metropolis. When Daśaratha convened a special meeting (session) of the Sabhā for electing a Yuvarāja, he is said to have sent invitations to the kings, to his subjects dwelling in the capital, and in the various provincial Nagarās or towns, and the rural tracts or Janapada (II—1—45).

*Paura-janapada mainly a Vaiśya Representation:* As the Brāhmaṇs were represented in the Council of Ministers, and as Rājanyas formed one portion of the Pariṣad or Sabhā, the Paura-jānapada section must have been the representative body of the Vaiśya community which lived by agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade (Kṛṣi, Go-rakṣā and Vārtā) and which very largely contributed towards the wealth of the empire.

*Other Sabhas:* King Nrga's Sabha consisted of ministers, priests, and the "Naigama" (VII—54—5, etc.). The Naigama was probably the equivalent of the "Paura" Corporation of Ayodhya. The Assembly (Sabhā) of King Nrga, summoned by him when he was

cursed by two Brahmanas, was requested by King Nṛga to appoint his son as his successor (VII—54—5 f.).

*Rāvaṇa's Sabhā:* Rāvaṇa's Sabhā consisted of military officers, ministers and relations. Rāvaṇa used to consult it only when he was in trouble. There are two references in the Rāmāyaṇa to the summoning of the Sabhā by Rāvaṇa (VI—6—1 f. and VI—11—18, etc.): (1) after Hanumān's devastation of Laṅkā, and (2) when the siege of Laṅkā was imminent. As Rāvaṇa considered that success depended on good counsel, he was anxious to get the unanimous decision of the experienced members of the Sabhā (VI—6—12).

*Functions of the Sabhā:* The Assembly was consulted on all important questions of administration such as the election of the king or the Crown Prince (II—2—1, etc.), declaration of war (VI—11—18 f), abdication of kings. Sanction was necessary to allow a king to retire from the office (II—2—8).

When old and infirm Daśaratha wanted to have a successor appointed in his place, he convened a special session of the Sabhā. The procedure is described in the second Canto of the Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa. After Daśaratha's death a meeting of the Sabhā was called in by the Rāja-kartāraḥ, (the king-makers) and the Cabinet, to elect a new king (II—67—2, etc.). After the completion of the funeral ceremonies of king Daśaratha by Bharata, the chief Purohita Vasiṣṭha called in a special session of the Sabhā, invited Bharata and offered him the Crown in the name of the Sabhā, and the people, agreeably to the wishes of Daśaratha and Kaikeyī (II—82—7, 12, etc.).

*Assembly Rights:* The Assembly had a right to choose the son of the King or anybody else as successor (II—67—38). King Daśaratha was aware of this right of the Assembly when he told the Sabhā that they might approve of his proposal to crown Rāma, or suggest some alternative names after due discussion (II—2—15 f.). The Assembly members had the right to delegate their powers of election to one member of the Assembly, in whose integrity they had confidence. After Daśaratha's death, the Sabhā members who were summoned to meet and arrange for the appointment of a king, delegated their powers to the Purohita Vasiṣṭha who presided over the Assembly, and gave him full discretion to appoint one of the



princes of Ikṣvaku's line or any other individual whom he might consider fit (II-67-38).

*Assembly Meeting:* The details connected with the summoning of the Assembly, dissolution, etc., may now be described. In the Rāmāyaṇa we have a description of the procedure, both (1) under a constitutional sovereign like Daśaratha in peace times, and (2) under an autocratic ruler like Rāvaṇa during war time. Many of the details are extremely interesting and resemble very much the procedure of the present day.

*Summons:* The Sabhā members were as a rule summoned by the king through his messengers or heralds (II-81-11, VI-11-18 and II-1-46). But in the absence of the king, it might be summoned, on extraordinary occasions, by the ministers or king-makers (Rāja-karṇārah) (II-67-2), or by the Chief Minister (II-81-12).

*Quarters for Assembly Members:* Quarters were provided for the representative members coming from outside to the metropolis (II-1-47).

*Council Hall:* The Council Hall in Ayodhyā was evidently part of the palace of the king as Daśaratha simply walked out of his palace to the Council Hall or Durbar Hall and walked out of the Council Chamber back to his quarters (II-4-1 and 3, and II-10-9).

The Durbar Hall in Ayodhyā must have been open in the front and the sides, as it is stated in II-3-25, that Daśaratha saw Rama coming along the road while seated on the throne in the midst of the Assembly.<sup>1</sup> Rama's Durbar Hall was in the Bahya-kakṣā or the outer courtyard of the Palace (VII-37-14). But in Laṅkā the Council Hall must have been a detached building, away from the palace, as Rāvaṇa is said to have galloped in a State procession from the palace to the Council Hall (VI-11-4, etc.). It is described as having been guarded by the soldiers during the session (VI-12-3).

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<sup>1</sup> The corridors of the Hall were evidently open to the public. Rama's friends who had been watching the proceedings in the Council Hall from the corridor, on hearing of the election of Rama as Yuvarāja ran to Kausalyā (mother of Rāma) and communicated to her the happy news (II-3-45).

*King, Ex-Officio President:* The President of the Assembly was the King, and in his absence, the Chief Priest or Purohita (II-2-1, VI-12-1 and II-81-11).

*State Dress of Kings and the Members:* The king used to dress himself for the occasion and take his seat first (II-1-47 f., VI-11-17). The members of Rāvaṇa's Council are described as being adorned with gold, gems, and jewels and as wearing excellent clothes, flower garlands and sandal paste (VI-11-31). The members of the Sabhā in Ayodhyā are described as shining with the lustre of fine clothes, sandal paste, etc. (II-82-2).

*Arrival of the President and the Members:* The king was the first to arrive and take his seat. As the king was the President, he was seated on the throne (II-1-48 and VI-11-17). The members were allowed to enter after the king took his seat.

*Seating Arrangements:* The seats were arranged facing the President and were of different kinds and of different materials, as some were intended for tributary princes, some for Kṣatriya and Vaiśya representatives, and some for Brāhmaṇas (II-1-49). Precedence was observed in the arrangement of the seats. The various members, in Rāvaṇa's Sabhā, sat down in the seats allotted to them. The seats were always allotted according to rank (II-82-2 and VI-11-25 and 30). The seating arrangements in Rāvaṇa's Assembly were in charge of military officers, specially told off for this duty (VI-11-30). As the seats are said to have been allotted to the members, in the Sābhā of Ayodhyā also, special officers must have looked after the seating arrangements. The King was evidently in the middle of one side of the chamber. The Crown Prince's seat next to his was inlaid with gold and gems (II-3-33). Precedence in seating is also well illustrated by the seating arrangements made by Bharadvāja when entertaining Bharata's army (II-91-38 ff.).

*Decorum:* In Dasaratha's Sabha, all the members including the tributary princes sat respectfully, facing the King (II-1-49). They spoke only after they had been asked to speak (II-2-19, etc.). In Rāma's Sabhā also, they spoke



only after being requested to speak (VII-59L-30),— *atha Rāmeṇa sampr̥stāḥ sarva eva sabhāśadaḥ*. The decorum expected of the members has been well described by Vālmīki, in describing Rāvaṇa's Sabhā (VI-11-32 f.).

### ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE.

*A typical Session (II-2-2, etc.) of Daśaratha's Sabhā:* The King as the President faced the audience and in a loud ringing voice, addressed the whole *Paṇḍita*, explaining his reasons for summoning it. He told the members, that he had administered the Empire to the best of his ability for a long time and that he desired to be released from the burden of ruling, on account of his old age. Then he proposed to the Assembly that his son Rāma who was younger, stronger and abler than himself might be appointed *Yuvarāja*, or Crown Prince, if the proposal was agreeable, wise and beneficial. He backed up his proposals with an enumeration of Rāma's virtues (II-2-10, etc.), and requested the Assembly to approve of his proposal or to make a better counter proposal, if they had any one in view. Evidently the King had only the power of nomination. The power of election, however, rested with the Assembly. Daśaratha left the decision to the Assembly, as they might consider him to be personally interested in Rāma's election, and as a thoroughly impartial decision by the disinterested assembly was necessary to elect the right person. It might be pointed out here that a proposition brought before the Assembly had to be discussed in the Cabinet at first. Daśaratha had discussed this question with his ministers beforehand (II-1-41), to find out, whether his proposal would be popular with his subjects (II-1-43).

The speech from the throne was duly and loudly applauded (II-2-18).

*Procedure in the Sabhā for the Transaction of Business—Discussion— Going into Committee:* It is to be noted that Daśaratha did not ask the assembly merely to register his decision but asked them to discuss and arrive at a unanimous decision.

Daśaratha was fully conscious of the limitations of a constitutional monarch. The Assembly, as directed by the King, consulted together, and soon agreed with one accord, that Daśaratha was really old and must be relieved, and that Rāma was the proper person to succeed him. The consultation and discussion of the Assembly members referred to in II-2-20 probably correspond to the modern procedure of 'going into a Committee'. Vālmīki does not state whether Daśaratha vacated the chair during the debate. The decision of the Sabhā was communicated to Daśaratha (II-2-21 f.) (evidently through some spokesman<sup>1</sup> as they could not have all shouted at the same time).

When communicating their decision, the Assembly enumerated all Rāma's virtues and qualifications, to prove that their decision was not actuated by any desire to please the king, but by the desire to find the best successor. Evidently it was the duty of the Assembly to give reasons for their decision. The Assembly, after stating their reasons for their choice of Rāma, informed Daśaratha that all the people in the empire rural as well as urban desired the coronation of Rāma as Yuvarāja (II-2-49).

King Daśaratha heard the decision of the Sabhā and expressed his pleasure at the honour done to him by the election of his son as the future king (II-3-2).

*Execution of the Decision of the Sabhā:* The king then turned round to the ministers at his side,<sup>2</sup> and gave them verbal orders to take the necessary steps to carry out the decision of the Assembly. The Assembly was pleased at the prompt steps taken by the king to carry out their decision and loudly applauded him (II-3-5). The Sabhā was the authority responsible for deciding the issues. The decisions were given effect to, by the king. Then the king sent Sumantra to fetch Rāma from his palace, in order to inform him of his election in the presence of the Assembly. Rāma arrived at the Sabhā, saluted the king and took the seat

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<sup>1</sup> The senior member of the body of elders referred to as Rajakartarah in II-79-1, was probably the spokesman.

<sup>2</sup> The ministers attended the meetings of the Sabha.



offered to him. After Rāma was seated, the king informed him in the presence of the Assembly that he would be crowned as Yuvarāja or Heir-Apparent, as he was born to his eldest queen of equal status; as he was a worthy son, as he was endowed with many virtues and as he had endeared himself to the subjects by his excellent qualities. Rāma after being informed of his election as Heir-Apparent, was advised by Dasaratha to be always humble, to control his senses, to avoid the vices of kings, to please his ministers and subjects, to keep his arsenals, granaries, and treasury well stocked, and to make himself popular by promoting the happiness of his subjects, and officers (II—3—38, etc.). Then Rāma took leave of the king. After Rāma's departure the assembly members also took leave of the king and went home.

*Responsibilities of Members in Ayodhya:* An idea of the responsibilities of the members can be gathered from the injunctions laid down by Rāma while presiding over the Dharma-sabhā (VII—59 M—34, etc.). "There can be no Sabhā without elders. Those who are not conversant with duty and justice cannot be called elders. There can be no justice without Truth, and Truth must be unadulterated. Partial truths are ignoble. Those members of the Sabhā who keep silent, though they may know the truth, must be considered as liars. Those members who do not speak the truth out of selfishness, anger or fear, when it is their duty to do so, will undergo eternal punishment in hell. It is the duty of every member to help the discussion to the best of his ability in a spirit of selflessness, without being influenced by greed, fear or favour."

*Responsibilities of the Members in Lañkā:* Two special sessions of Rāvaṇa's Sabhā are described by Vālmīki, one in the 6th Canto and the other in the 11th and the 12th Cantos of the Yuddha Kāṇḍa. The description of the first meeting is very incomplete. The Canto opens with the statement that Rāvaṇa informed the Rākṣasa members, of the havoc caused by Hanumān, and asked them to advise him about the steps to be taken by him. In his opening address Rāvaṇa divided the kings into three classes.

1. The king who sought the counsel of able and faithful

ministers, friends and kinsmen, who had a common interest with him, and then proceeded to take action with their help, was considered to belong to the highest class.

2. The king who planned alone and did not seek counsel, and who acted upon his own decisions belonged to the middling or the second class.
3. The king who did not weigh the pros and cons and impulsively rushed to action and risked everything, was of the third or the lowest class.

He defined the best decision as one arrived at unanimously after full discussion by ministers thoroughly conversant with politics, and then asked his counsellors to tell him what was to be done to protect the city against Rāma (VI—6—12, etc.).

The first council mainly consisted of bellicose flatterers, who only spoke of Rāvaṇa's prowess, and advised him to avenge the insults of Hanumān, and never to give away Sītā, however unfair it might be since it involved the loss of his prestige !

*War Session of the Sabhā in Laṅka:* A description of Rāvaṇa's second Sabhā gives us a good idea of the state pageantry and the conduct of special sessions (VI—11th Canto).

*The State Drive from the Palace to the Sabhā:* Rāvaṇa drove in a big golden State Chariot, ornamented with gems; corals, and golden tassels, drawn by well-broken and trained horses. The royal chariot was preceded by fully armed Rākṣasa soldiers, carrying shields and swords and various weapons. The chariot was escorted at the back and the sides by the body-guards, richly arrayed in coloured robes.

Famous Atiratha warriors followed his chariot; some on chariots, some on big elephants (in rut) and others on prancing steeds. Rāvaṇa went to the Sabhā with the royal paraphernalia. A white royal umbrella was held over his head and he was fanned on the two sides with chouries and fans. The noise of the Rākṣasas' chariots that rolled along the main roads, and the fanfare of trumpets created great tumult. The people standing on the roads



saluted him with añjali-bandha and bowed heads. At the entrance of the Sabhā, the Rākṣasa guards shouted "Victory, Victory to Rāvana".

*The Sabhā Hall—The Seats-Seating Arrangements:* The Sabhā Hall was luxuriously constructed with gold and silver pillars, crystal floors, spread over with carpets of gold-cloth and was protected by six hundred Rākṣasas. Rāvana's royal cushioned seat was made of Lapiz Lazuli and covered with the softest deer skin. Some of the seats were wooden stools, and some were mats placed on the floor. The seating arrangements were in charge of the Generals—Śuka and Prahasta (VI—11—30). It is interesting to note that the members of the Sabhā both in Ayodhyā and Laṅkā were not allowed to sit anywhere, but were directed to seats set apart for them, by the officers in charge of the seating arrangements.

After Rāvana took his seat, he ordered the heralds to speedily summon all the members to the Council Hall as very important and urgent business had to be transacted.

*Urgent Summons:* The heralds sped from house to house and informed the Rākṣasas, of Rāvana's command. The members on being urgently summoned rushed to the Hall, some on horses, some on elephants, some on foot, and some on chariots. Leaving the conveyances outside the gate, the members entered the Sabhā on foot.

*Salute:* The members on entering the Council Chamber saluted the king by grasping his feet. They were duly honoured and directed to their respective seats.

*Members:* The Council Hall was crowded with learned ministers, wise councillors, and hundreds of military officers. Last came Vibhīṣaṇa, a senior member of the Council who entered and saluted his elder brother, the President King.

*Court Dress of Members* The Rākṣasa members of the Sabhā who attended the session were all well adorned with gems and jewels and decked in excellent clothing, as has already been pointed out. They were also wearing garlands.

*Etiquette of Members:* None of the members made any noise, none of them spoke aloud, none of them told an untruth. Their faces were all turned towards the king.

*Military Guard:* The session being a special war session, Rāvaṇa as President, took extraordinary precautions. Rāvaṇa ordered Prahasta, the Commander-in-Chief, to make arrangements to guard the Assembly Hall and the fort; and waited for Prahasta's return before commencing the business (VI-12-1,) etc.). Prahasta redoubled the guards and informed Rāvaṇa that he might proceed with the business. The precautions were partly to guard against surprise attacks by the enemy, while all the chief military officers were engaged in the Council, and partly to prevent the disclosure of state secrets and plans. Rāvaṇa like Cromwell might also have intended to intimidate the members.

*Business or Procedure:* Rāvaṇa began by flattering the members for the successful help rendered by them on former occasions. He then explained that he had delayed the summons for the meeting, as his powerful brother, Kumbhakarna had been absent till then. He told the Assembly that his abduction of Sītā was the cause of all the trouble and requested them to help him to keep Sītā and kill Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

Kumbhakarna, the senior member of the Assembly, took Rāvaṇa to task for his misdeeds and his ignorance of "Politics". He told Rāvaṇa that he should have asked for their advice before he abducted Sītā and not after the foul deed. But as a Government member, he thought he was bound to back up the king, as the thing was a "*fait accompli*". He promised to help the king to exterminate the enemies. He was followed by another member of the front bench Mahāpārśva who advised Rāvaṇa to follow up the abduction by the rape of Sītā without worrying about the consequences. He tried to convince Rāvaṇa that their forces would be quite sufficient to smash the enemy.

Vibhīṣaṇa also one of the front-benchers, thought it his duty to warn the king Rāvaṇa of the impending ruin of himself, his family and his whole army. He pointed out the superiority of Rāma, and the justness of his cause; and advised the king to conciliate Rāma by handing over Sītā with his apologies. Vibhīṣaṇa thought that conciliation would



be the only course to save Rāvaṇa and his family from ruin. Then followed the speeches of the other members of the Assembly who all supported Rāvaṇa in his decision to declare war. Rāvaṇa the President of the Assembly accused the only truthful and faithful counsellor Vibhīṣaṇa, of having been bribed by the enemy; and told him he was fouling his own nest. Vibhīṣaṇa's well-meant advice was unpalatable to Rāvaṇa, and was attributed to corruption. When Rāvaṇa abused him as a traitor Vibhīṣaṇa feeling insulted walked out of the chamber.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MINISTRY

*Ministers and Ministry:* In the Rāmāyaṇa the ministers are called Amātyas (I-7-1 f., I-10-2), Sacivas (I-8-21 f., and VII-59-M-25, etc.), Mantriṇaḥ (I-7-4) or Rājā-kartāraḥ (II-67-2). The kings carried on the administration with the help of the ministerial council which was composed as follows:

A. *Amātya-gaṇa or Cabinet:* The members were called Amātyas or Sacivas. They are also referred to as Mantrins, as they were ex-officio members of the Ministry.\* Each was in charge of a portfolio and was the executive head of his department.

B. Mantriṇaḥ also called Guravaḥ (Elders) (I-8-4) a purely advisory body which had to be invariably consulted before taking action. They were also designated Brahmanas, Dvijas, or Dvijagryas. During an interregnum they functioned as King-makers (Rājā-kartāraḥ) II-67-2.

These were consulted after a course of action had been first discussed and settled by the King and the Cabinet.

As the king was the religious head of the State, and as the whole life of the subjects and princes was dominated by religion, the Ministers were led by Vasiṣṭha, the chief priest who was also the Prime Minister, *de facto*. Vasiṣṭha, the Purohita was also one of the Mantrins—(Vasiṣṭha-pramukhā mantriṇaḥ VII-37-15).

The Purohita or the Chief Priest Vasiṣṭha was invariably associated with the Amātya-gaṇa, as he was the most learned and respected adviser and Guru (or preceptor) of the Ikṣvāku princes. He took a leading part in the deliberations of the Amātya-gaṇa. Vasiṣṭha was considered by Daśaratha as his family deity (I-70-16). In all matters of State, Daśaratha

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\*The same Sumantra is called an Amtya (8th Amatyā) in I-7-3 and a Mantrin in I-8-4 (Mantri-sattama) and a Saciva in VII-59M-26 (Sacivah sumahabalah). Therefore the Amātyas were ex-officio mantrins as well.



discussed the questions with the ministers, and the Purohita, before taking action.

*Mantrins or Counsellors:* The second body of "the other Mantrins" (apare mantriṇaḥ of 1-7-4 f.), who helped Daśaratha, consisted of Suyajña, Jābāli, Kaśyapa, Gautama, Mārkaṇḍeya and Kātyāyana, and also the two Ṛtviḥs Vasīṣṭha and Vāmadeva (1-7-4 f.). This body is referred to as Mantrins (1-9-14), as 'Gurus' (1-8-4), as Dvijātayaḥ (1-12-5), as Dvijas (1-12-20) and as Brāhmaṇas (11-68-1). They were all Brahma Ṛṣis, (1-7-5) and Veda-pāragas (1-8-5). They were hereditary advisers (Paurvakas 1-7-5) of the dynasty, noted for their age, wisdom, religious lore and knowledge of tradition. This group of ministers was invariably consulted when the king was in doubt or difficulties. They were not always by the side of the kings like the Cabinet ministers or Amātyas but were sent for when wanted. They were only Mantrins or Counsellors. These Mantriṇaḥ were sent for, when Daśaratha wanted to consider the propriety of performing a Horse Sacrifice (1-8-5), and by Rāma when he had to meet the charge of mal-administration brought against him by a Brāhmaṇ villager (VII-74-3 f.), and when he had to prove Sītā's chastity in public (VII-96-2, etc.). This body as pointed out before, may be called the "Council of Elders" or The Elders. Their extensive knowledge of sacred lore, morality, history, tradition and custom, and their experience, were of great help to the kings. The need for such a consultative body is brought out by the following extract from K. V. Rangaswāmi Aiyāṅgār's "Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity". "It was an admitted duty of the State to maintain Dharma, since the question would frequently arise as to what was or was not consistent with Dharma. The determination of such points would not be simple, or within the province of mere secular administrators. For Dharma was of many kinds, was constantly growing, and was never very definite. It could be, for example, Sādhāraṇa Dharma, i.e., ordinary equity and morality, of the kind instanced in the following quotations from Vasīṣṭha (anterior to 200 B.C.) and Viṣṇu (A.D. 100); Truthfulness, freedom from anger, liberality, abstention from injuring living beings, and the perpetuation of the family are the Dharma common

to all. Forbearance, truth, self-restraint, purity, liberality, non-injury to life, obedience to spiritual guides, pilgrimages to holy places, pity for the afflicted, straight-dealing, freedom from avarice, reverence towards Gods and Brahmanas—these are the Dharma common to all classes. Or again, Dharma might be *Asādhāraṇa*, i.e., of a special character. In this class would be included *Varṇa Dharma* (obligations of castes), *Āśrama Dharma* (regulations of the orders or stages of life), *Varṇāśrama Dharma* (rules about both castes and orders and their inter-relations), *Guna Dharma* and *Naimittika Dharma*. Or again, a cross classification of Dharma would give as its constituents, *Ācāra Dharma* (valid usage), *Vyavahāra Dharma* (rules about affairs) and *Prāyaścitta Dharma* (rules of penance). Ordinarily except in regard to *Sādhāraṇa Dharma* (or even in it, there would arise difficult questions, as the tendency would ever be, to put in as common obligations, the duties of particular sections or classes) the constituents of the other types of Dharma would offer nice points for academic elaboration and differentiation. Should a State, therefore, undertake to maintain Dharma, it would have frequently to obtain opinions that would be deemed authoritative in cases in which points of Dharma were at issue."

How could such opinions be obtained? Who was competent to give them? Certainly, this Council of Elders consisting of learned, hoary sages must have been competent.

*King-Makers or Rāja-kartāraḥ:* The Elders or *Mantriṇaḥ* were also called "*Rāja-kartāraḥ*" or the king-makers. These Elders were the king-makers, as they had absolutely no private interest in the nomination or election of the king.

Immediately after the death of Daśaratha, these *Brāhmaṇas* or elders went in a body, to the *Sabhā* (Assembly Hall (II-67-2) and together with the *Amātyas*, addressed *Vasiṣṭha* the king's *Purohita* and *de facto* Prime Minister, pointed out to him the dangers of anarchy and empowered him to crown as King one of the *Ikṣvāku* princes or any body else who might be considered fit by him (II-67-2, etc., 38). Verses 2, 3 and 4 make it perfectly clear that the Elders were the *Rāja-kartāraḥ* who had the right to take action after the



king's death. But they deputed their powers to Vasiṣṭha the Prime Minister. As a quick and sound decision was necessary in the interests of the State, and as there might have been some difference of opinion when eight ministers and six Elders or counsellors had to take action, they adopted the wisest course and delegated their powers to the foremost, the wisest, the most disinterested and the universally respected Prime Minister, Vasiṣṭha, and abided by his decision to send for Prince Bharata at once (II-67-38 and II-68-4).

Again after the completion of Daśaratha's funeral ceremonies, the same Mantriṇaḥ or Counsellors or Elders functioning as Rāja-kartāraḥ, offered the sovereignty to Prince Bharata, in the name of Svajana (Amātyas, etc.) and the Śreṇyaḥ (the Corporation of the city) (II-79-1 and 4). It may be noted that the Rāja-kartāraḥ (and not the Amātyas) made the offer, and that the offer was made by them, as representatives of Svajana (Amātyas, etc.) and Śreṇyaḥ (Corporation of the city) and not in their own name.

Though Vālmīki uses the term Mantrins in some places, e.g., I-7-22 to indicate the whole Ministry, he restricts the word to the Elders in the majority of places (II-112-17 and other places). In a few places, he calls an Amātya also a Mantrin (I-8-3 and I-10-6). In Vālmīki's mind, there is always a distinction between the executive Amātyas or Sacivas and the Counsellors or Mantrins. When Rāma was advising Bharata to consult his Amātyas and Mantrins (II-112-17) he used the terms Mantrins to designate the Counsellors. Sugrīva's minister Hanumān (an executive minister) is spoken of as a Saciva (IV-3-21, 26), while the Counsellors who insisted on Sugrīva's coronation (when Vālī was supposed to have died) are called Mantrins (IV-9-21). The four executive ministers closely associated with Vibhīṣaṇa are spoken of as his Amātyas (VII-5-41). Rāvaṇa's ministers who accompanied him to fight against the Devas and the princes of the earth are also referred to as Sacivas (VII-27-27) while his counsellors in the Sabha are called Mantra-tattvajña-Mantrins (V-49-13).

*Ministers Nominated:* There is no mention of the election of the Ministers. The Ministers were evidently nominated by the King; as Rāma asked Bharata whether he had appointed brave, learned, loyal and clever men of noble birth, etc., as his ministers (Mantrins) (II—100—15).

*Number of Members of the Council and the Cabinet:* In Ayodhyā, King Daśaratha was helped in the administration by (a) eight Amātyas and (b) two Ṛtviks and six other Mantrins (I—7—1, etc.<sup>1</sup>). The two divisions of the Ministry, Amātyas and Dvījas or Mantrins are well brought out in II—67—4.

*Mantri-pariṣad:* The Amātyas or Sacivas, Dhṛṣṭi, Jayanta and Vijaya; Siddhārtha and Artha-sādhaka, Aśoka, Mantrapāla and Sumantra constituted the Amātya-gaṇa of Daśaratha. The Amātya-gaṇa and the Brāhmaṇa Mantrins together constituted the Mantri-pariṣad. In Ayodhyā, the proposals dealt with by the Cabinet of Amātyas and the Purohita had to be placed before the whole Council of Ministers or the Ministry or the Mantri-pariṣad which consisted of (a) the Cabinet or Amātya-gaṇa (II—68—1) and (b) the Counsellors or Mantrins.

*Amātyas (also Ex-Officio Mantrins):* The Amātyas formed the inner body of the Ministry, or the Cabinet; and they were also known as Mantriṇaḥ, as they were ex-officio members of "the joint body of Mantriṇaḥ" consisting of Amātyas and Counsellors (Gurus or Elders or Dvījas). During the reigns of Daśaratha and Rāma, Vasiṣṭha was the *de facto* Prime Minister on account of his learning, status, and towering personality, though Siddhārtha is referred to as Mahā-mātra in one context. As the terms Amātyas and Sacivas are always used in the plural, and as they are also referred to as Amātya-gaṇa (II—68—1) they must have acted as one body,—the Cabinet. The Amātya-gaṇa and the Brāhmaṇas, (i.e.,) the Rāja-kartāraḥ or Dvījāḥ of II—67—2 and 4) are referred to as Mantriṇaḥ in II—68—7.

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<sup>1</sup>Evidently the term Mantrin was applied to all these members—the Amātyas as well as the Elders in a general sense.



*Classes of Amātyas (II—100—24. etc.):* Rāma divided them into three classes—Superior, Middling and Inferior. They were to be employed according to their abilities in works of great importance, works of middling importance and in ordinary work respectively. The special term Bhṛtyas in (II—100—25) should be taken to mean Amātyas (Public servant or minister) as the preceding and succeeding verses refer to Amātyas.

Important functions were entrusted to hereditary Ministers whose incorruptibility had been tested and who were pure in word, body and mind. II—100—26.

*Selection of Ministers—Qualifications of Ministers:* The choice of ministers was a royal prerogative. Only hereditary ministers well tested for loyalty, honesty and incorruptibility could be employed in the transaction of important business (II—100—26, etc.). The ministers had to be intelligent, reliable, bold and resourceful. They were to be clever in reading the thoughts of others, in discovering the motives and feelings of others, and in vigilantly guarding the State secrets. They were to be learned in polity or the political science, as well as in all branches of learning. They were expected to be of well-controlled senses, so that they might not be tempted by bribes or diverted from their duties by pleasures (II—100—15, etc.). It was their duty to speak the truth, and give their honest opinions. They must not keep silent, when knowing the truth, out of fear or greed or self-interest (VII—59 M—35, etc.). They must be impartial in deciding cases between the rich and the poor. They should not be influenced by the wealth or the position of one of the parties (II—100—58). The ministers were generally hereditary (Paurvakāḥ) (I—7—5), learned in the Vedas (Bahuśrutāḥ) and the sciences (Śāstraññāḥ), clever in legal lore (Vyavahāreṣu kuśalāḥ), clever in taxation and the levy of troops, (kośa-saṁgrahaṇe yuktāḥ balasya ca parigrahe), incorruptible (śucināḥ), brave (vīrāḥ), skilful in diplomacy (śmadhi-vigraha-tattvajñāḥ) and well versed in political science (rājaśāstram anuṣṭhitāḥ, nītiśāstra-viśeṣajñāḥ). They were chosen from the wealthy (prakṛtyā sampadānvitāḥ) and therefore free from temptation (I—7—5. etc.).

*Amātyās of Rāma:* Rāma's ministers were the same old ministers of Daśaratha. They were well versed in law, high-minded, conversant with Politics and all the Śāstras, intelligent, born in respectable families and wise in counsel (VII—59 M—26, etc.). They were all statesmen of international reputation (*videśeṣvapi vijñātāḥ sarvato buddhiniścayāt—* I-7—16). The Ministers were specially conversant with *nīti-śāstra* or *mantra-tattva* or Politics (I—7—17 and V—49—13).

*The Purohita—A Minister:* The Chief Priest or Purohita was evidently associated with the Ministry (I—10—2 and I—19—16). During the reigns of Daśaratha and Rāma, Vasiṣṭha the Purohita was also a Mantrin (Minister) and wielded enormous powers (II—115—10, VII—37—15 and I—68—16).

Daśaratha never did any business without consulting his Purohita Vasiṣṭha and the Ministers. Vasiṣṭha was one of the Mantrins and the Śreṣṭha of the lot (I—7—4, I—68—16 and II—67—4). When the Rājakartāraḥ (the Elders of the Council, and the Amātyas) held a session of the Council to appoint a successor to Daśaratha, they looked for guidance from the foremost of them, the royal Purohita and *de facto* Chief Minister (II—67—4).

Vasiṣṭha being an ascetic lived outside the city. He is said to have traversed and crossed the city to reach the palace on Rāma's coronation day (II—14—26 and 29). He rode in a special chariot with pure and clean fittings (*brahmaṇ rathavaram* II—5—4). He commanded the respect of the King and the Cabinet.

In the absence of the king, the Purohita Vasiṣṭha, as the foremost minister, and chief religious head, had right to occupy the Presidential seat in the Sabhā, to summon the Assembly or Sabhā, to summon even the Princes to the Assembly, and to offer the throne to the successor (II—81—9, etc. and II—82—4, etc.).

*Amātyās probably of the Kṣattriya Varṇa:* As bravery, prowess and valour were considered important qualifications for the Amātyās (I—7—6 and 11) they were evidently recruited from the Kṣattriyas and they evidently had to take



part in battles. Otherwise there is no point in the advice to select "śūrāḥ" as Ministers (II-100-15). Rāvaṇa's ministers (Sacivas) fought with the Devas and various kings when Rāvaṇa led an expedition against them (VII-14-1, etc., VII-19-18 and VII-27-27). The Mantriṇaḥ (Ministers) of King Kārtavīrya Arjuna fought with Rāvaṇa's generals (VII-32-26, 30 and 32).

*Distribution of Portfolios:* Griffith in his translation (p. 15 of the Library Edition) of the Rāmāyaṇa has stated that three of Dasaratha's Amātyās dealt with war, two with Finance, two with Law and Justice while the eighth one was in charge of the Chariots, etc. But no such distribution is definitely referred to in the text.

Griffith's <sup>1</sup> conclusions are evidently based on the literal meanings of the names of the ministers of Daśaratha.

As the literal meanings of the terms Dhṛṣṭi, Jayanta and Vijaya are Boldness, Victorious son of Indra, and Conquest, Griffith is of opinion that the names should not be taken as proper names but as names indicative of their functions and that these three ministers Dhṛṣṭi, Jayanta and Vijaya might have been ministers holding the portfolio of War. Siddhārtha literally means the successful man. It may also be understood as one who has attained success in Artha or the acquisition of riches or wealth. Arthasādhaka is literally one efficient in artha or polity. Hence the ministers Siddhārtha and Arthasādhaka may be considered as Finance Ministers. The latter of the two was probably charged with Diplomacy as he was called during Rāma's regime Rāṣṭra-vardhana—literally one extending the dominions. He might have been a Foreign Secretary or Diplomat (VII-59M-26) in Rāma's time. The literal meaning of Aśoka is "without sorrow". A minister can cause sorrow to the people only by interfering with their persons or property, (i.e., by mal-administration of criminal and civil justice), therefore the minister Aśoka must have dealt with the portfolio of Law and Order. Mantrapāla is one who protects Mantra or the Sacred Texts (of three kinds—

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1. The distribution of duties among the ministry was probably as outlined by Griffith, but we cannot be absolutely certain. It need not be considered entirely imaginative. Such a distribution might have existed.

Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman). The minister Mantrapāla might have had the portfolio of Religion or Sacred Law. As the king was the religious head of the State and had to administer sacred law as well as secular law, one of the Amātyas was probably put in charge of the portfolio of Religious or Sacred Law. This view is confirmed by the name given to him under Rāma's régime—Dharmapāla (VII—59M—26).

Sumantra the eighth minister was the Royal Equerry, bard or minstrel, charioteer, and Private Secretary to both Daśarātha and Rāma. His portfolio was evidently under the department "Miscellaneous." He was the most important, and favourite minister of Dasaratha and Rāma. In the Epic he plays quite as important a part as the Prime Minister Vasiṣṭha.

As the same qualifications mentioned in I—7—6, etc., applied to all the Amātyas, we may infer the possibility of an exchange of portfolios when considered necessary.

*Duties of Ministers:* The duties of the Ministers were various (I—7—6, etc.). Those in charge of administration and law were responsible for the protection of the kingdom, the protection of the innocent from the lawless, and the impartial and sympathetic administration of justice. The administration had to be strict enough to keep the people in wholesome dread of the law and prevent them from offending against Truth, Morals and Religion (I—7—9, etc.). It must be borne in mind that the actual administration was carried out by the Tirthas (Departmental Heads).

Those in charge of Finance has to be very clever in filling the treasury, without causing undue hardship especially in the case of Brāhmanas and Kṣattriyas. Evidently the taxes were mainly collected from the rich Vaiśya community which followed the pursuits of agriculture, cattle-rearing, trade, etc.

Those in charge of Diplomacy had to be well up in "Political Science" or Rāja-śāstra (both in Theory and Practice) and make use of the four diplomatic means: Sāma, Dāna, Bheda and Daṇḍa in due season. They had to conceal their own 'policy' and be assiduous in finding out the deeds and intentions of foes and neighbours by means of spies.

The ministers in charge of the Army had to be vigilant in protecting their subjects, and maintaining peace in the city



and the provinces. They were responsible for recruiting the Army and maintaining it in a state of efficiency.

The respective functions of the Amātyas and Mantrins are well explained in VI-11-26 f. where Vālmīki describes the Sabhā of Rāvaṇa: The Mantrins are described as clever in the execution of settled projects—niscayārtheṣu paṇḍitāḥ; the Amātyas as all-knowing counsellors—sarvajñā buddhidarśanāḥ. The two terms Amātyāḥ and Mantriṇaḥ are evidently transposed. But the passage brings out the distinction between the two classes of ministers.

As regards the special knowledge of the ministers, they were divided in Rāma's time into Vyavahārajña, Dharmapāraga and Nītijña, (those conversant with Secular Law, and those conversent with Sacred Law) and those adept in Political Science. The ministers conversant with law seem to have sat with the king when he administered justice, seated in his Dharmāsana (VII-59K-1, etc.). The ordinary law courts were presided over by the Dharmapālakas (VII-59L-32). These latter officers had also to sit in the King's Court of Justice, whenever the king personally administered justice in the Royal Court. The ministers were in close attendance upon the king and intimately associated with him in the administration. They were invariably consulted before the king took any action. Their advice was sought for, by the kings, before embarking on costly enterprises, e.g., performance of horse sacrifices (I-8-3 and I-9-14), before sending the Crown Prince out of the kingdom on any business (I-19-16), before selecting a bride for the Crown Prince (I-68-16, etc.), before placing a proposition for war (VI-6-5, etc., VI-41-58, etc. and VI-12-27). They attended on the king when he gave public audience (VII-37-15) and when he was seated on the Dharmāsana to administer justice (VII-59K-3 and VII-59L-32). They were also sent for, when the king had to deal with difficult situations (VII-59M-25, etc. and VII-74-1, etc.).

*Co-operation of Kings and Ministers:* Though the ministers were entrusted with the responsibility of governing, they had to take orders from the king who had to give them audience very frequently. The neglect of the administration

and addiction to sensual pleasures were considered faults in a king, (IV—29—2, etc.).

**Cabinet and Kings:** At least three or four important ministers (II—100—18 and 71) had to be consulted on all administrative matters. As already referred to, Daśaratha consulted the Cabinet on all important matters. Rāma consulted his Mantrins, and Brāhmaṇ Sages, when charged with mal-administration by a Brāhmaṇ villager who had lost his child (VII—73—10 and VII—74—3, etc.).

It was necessary for the kings to get the independent views of the ministers, unprejudiced or uninfluenced by the views of their colleagues, at first, and then obtain the views of the whole body at a meeting when each one could advance his own views and discuss the situation (II—100—71). Bharata was advised by Rāma not to depend on himself alone but to consult more than one minister, preferably three or four (II—100—18 and 71). He was warned not to consult too many at a time. The ministers were expected to be well up in Politics and give salutary advice after discussing the pros and cons (VI—6—7, etc.).

**The Cabinet Decisions:** Decisions, according to Rāvaṇa were of three kinds. The unanimous decision arrived at by Ministers thoroughly conversant with politics, was considered to be the best decision. The decision arrived at after discussing all the possible factors and after making compromises, was of the middling kind. The worst decision was that which was contradictory and indefinite, owing to the wide divergence of views between the counsellors (VI—6—12, etc.).

**Ministers had to attend the Sabhā Meetings:** The Cabinet Ministers or Amātyas were ex-officio members of (1) the Ministerial Council (Mantriṇaḥ) and (2) the Sabhā. The ministers (Amātyas and Mantrins) certainly sat in the Sabhā or Assembly during the deliberations, during Daśaratha's reign, as Daśaratha is described as holding a consultation with his ministers immediately after the departure of the Pauras (II—4—1), before leaving the Sabhā for the inner apartment (II—4—3). In the case of Rāvaṇa's Pariṣad (Assembly) his



ministers who were all Generals in the Army as well, are described as attending the Sabhā (VI—11th Canto). As ministers were executive officers, they had to sit with the king in the Assembly as well as in the Royal Court of Justice (VII—59 K—3, VII—59 L—32 and VII—59 M—27). They had to carry out the decisions of the Council and the decisions of the Assembly (Sabhā) under the orders of the king (I—10—6, I—12—13, 19 and II—3—5).

The Amātyas were ordered by king Daśaratha, to carry out the measures sanctioned by the Assembly or Mantrins on important occasions such as the Horse sacrifice, or the coronation of the Crown Prince (I—8—13, I—12—13, II—2—15 f.). King Romapāda consulted the body of mantrins as to the ways and means of bringing Sage Rṣyaśṛṅga from the hermitage to his capital; and ordered the Amātyas to execute the plan settled (I—9—14 and I—10—2).

The Amātyas had to accompany the king wherever he went, during processions, expeditions, tours, etc. (I—69—4, I—70—28, II—83—2, II—113—2, II—115—9, VI—130—9, 16, VI—131—36 and VII—27—27).

*Mantrins and Restraint of Kings:* It was the duty of the Ministers (as pointed out by Mārīca to Rāvaṇa) to restrain a rash and vicious monarch from evil deeds. The king must be protected in all circumstances by the Ministers, whose welfare was bound up with that of the kings (III—41—6, etc.). The ministers were expected to restrain the kings:

- (1) from forcible collection of excessive taxes, (II—100—28) and
- (2) from inflicting too severe punishments on the subjects (II—100—27 f.).

When Sugrīva forgot his royal duties and his sacred obligations to Rāma, and foolishly spent his time in drinking, Hanumān his faithful Minister considered it his duty to warn him of the impending danger and to give him the necessary advice (IV—29—5, etc.). When Rāvaṇa was about to kill Sītā and incur the sin of Strīhatyā his ministers considered it their duty to restrain the monarch from killing Sītā (VI—93—58).

Rāvaṇa's notions about the conduct of Ministers were very peculiar. He found fault with Mārīca for giving him salutary

advice (II-40-9, etc.), and also with Śuka and Sāraṇa for telling him unpleasant truths (VI-29-7, etc.).

*Ministers and Coronation ceremonies:* The Ministers had to participate in the Coronation ceremonies of the king (IV-9-21, IV-26-33 f. and VI-131-26).

*Official costume or uniform of Ministers:* Ministers (Amātyas) were expected to deck themselves with fine clothes and ornaments when they carried on their official duties (suvāsasaḥ suveśāś ca I-7-15, II-82-2 and VI-11-31). The king as President of the Council or Sabhā had also to adorn and deck himself, as has already been pointed out (II-1-47 and V-49-2, etc.).

*Cabinet meetings in the Palace:* In Ayodhyā the Cabinet met and transacted business inside the palace buildings (II-10-9 and II-4-3). The Cabinet of Ministers in Laṅkā also used to meet the king in the king's palace and discuss matters before convening a meeting of the Sabhā (VI-10-12).

*Cabinet not to leave the headquarters:* The Ministers or Amātyas carried on the administration at the metropolis. When Daśratha went to Mithilā to attend Rāma's marriage, he took with him the Priest-Prime Minister, and the Elders (I-69-4). The Amātyas or Sacivas seem to have been left behind to look after the administration.

When Bharata ruled at Nandigrāma he was attended only by the elders (II-115-9 f., 13 and 22). The Sacivas (Cabinet) evidently carried on their duties at the headquarters—the metropolis. During the welcome of Rāma, returning from exile, the Sacivas of Bharata first made the necessary arrangements for the welcome and the coronation of Rāma, and then went out of the city to join the procession (VI-131-23, etc.).

These references show that the Cabinet Ministers always held office in the metropolis. But when the king, the army, the zenana, practically the whole Government moved out of the city, e.g., during King Viśvāmitra's tour, the Ministers went out with the king (I-53-7).



## CHAPTER V

### PERMANENT OFFICIALS — DEPARTMENTAL HEADS

*The Tīrthas:* The higher officials most of whom formed the Departmental Heads of the State went by the name of "Tīrthas". The administration was carried on by the Cabinet Ministers (Amātya-gaṇa, or Amātyas or Sacivas) with the help of the machinery known as Tīrthas. The Tīrthas are referred to by Rāma in his conversation with Bharata in the Kaccit Sarga (II—100—36). The actual designations of the Tīrthas though not given in the text are mentioned in the commentary by Govindarāja who quotes from some unspecified book.

The eighteen Tīrthas or Officials, as explained in the commentary of Govindarāja are:—

- 1 Mantrin—Minister
- 2 Purohita—Chief Priest
- 3 Yuvarāja—Crown Prince
- 4 Senāpti—Commander-in-Chief
- 5 Dauvārika—Lord Chamberlain
- 6 Āntarvaṃśika—Palace Manager
- 7 Kārāgārādhikṛt—Superintendent of the Jail Department
- 8 Artha-saṃcayakṛt—Finance Secretary or Chancellor of the Exchequer
- 9 Kārya-niyojāka—Chief Secretary
- 10 Prāḍ-vivāka—Judge
- 11 Senānāyaka—Army Paymaster
- 12 Nagarādhyakṣa—The Fort Commandant or the City Governor
- 13 Karmāntika—Civil Paymaster<sup>1</sup>
- 14 Sabhya—Council Secretary
- 15 Dharmādhyakṣa—Civil Court Judge or Chief Justice<sup>2</sup>
- 16 Daṇḍapāla—Magistrate or Police Commissioner
- 17 Durgapāla—Commander of the Forts
- 18 Rāstrāntarapāla—Frontier Governor.

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<sup>1</sup>—According to Jayaswal, Officer-in-Charge of Mines and Factories.

<sup>2</sup>—Jayaswal thinks that this is identical with the 'Pandita' of Sukraniti.

“The reason for this traditional division of the State into the eighteen Tithas, probably lies in the fact that they exhaust, roughly at least, the whole sphere of work of a State, and meet its indispensable requirements—providing for the deliberation of State questions and assistance to the sovereign, both secular and spiritual, for his personal safety and convenience, for the administration of justice in the country, for its internal peace and its external security, for the collection of State dues and their application and lastly for the supply of the material needs of the people by the exploitation of its natural resources—by manufactures, commerce and industries.”<sup>1</sup>

Rāma pointed out to Bharata that a wise king should always keep himself well informed of the honesty, intentions and behaviour of these eighteen officers of the enemy kings, and of the last mentioned fifteen officers in his own kingdom, by mean of spies (II—100—36).

Each of these officers (eighteen of the enemy kingdom and fifteen of his own kingdom) should be constantly spied upon, each by three spies independent and unknown to each other. The list given in the Rāmāyaṇa commentary differs very little from the list of eighteen Tīrthas given in the Mahābhārata and Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Law—Ancient Indian Polity, p. 84,86.

<sup>2</sup> See V.R.R. Diksitar: Hindu Administrative Institution, p.106.



## CHAPTER VI

### REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

Daśaratha's ministers were very diligent in replenishing the treasury (kośa-saṃgrahaṇe yuktāḥ—I-7-10). They are described as collecting the taxes without troubling the Kṣātriyas and Brāhmaṇas. It was the Vaiśya merchants who had to bear the main burden of taxation (I-7-12).

Two of Daśaratha's ministers, probably Siddhārtha and Arthasādhaka were evidently entrusted with the Revenue portfolio.<sup>1</sup> The departmental heads (Tīrthas) connected with the Revenue administration are the following according to the commentator Govindarāja.<sup>2</sup>

1. Artha-saṃcayakṛt—Finance Secretary
2. Senā-nāyaka—Army Paymaster
3. Karmāntika—Civil Paymaster.

The King had also a separate officer (vitta-saṃcaya-vyāpṛtaḥ) in charge of his treasury (II-39-14). The treasurer was called kośādhyakṣa (VII-91-23).

The king's income was derived mainly from the Baliṣaḍbhāga or the payment of one-sixth of the profits, paid by the subjects (VII-74-29 and II-75-24). It must have been supplemented by the tributes from the vassal kings (I-5-14, II-82-8 and VII-39-8). As Rāma made enquiries about the "Mines" in Ayodhyā when conversing with Bharata, it may be inferred that the kings received royalties on mines also (II-100-45). Viśvāmitra speaks of the king as a Ratnahārī (I-53-9), as one entitled to the gems in the land, or the best of everything. The king was therefore entitled to a share in every kind of profit.

Taxes, tributes and royalties were the main sources of income mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa.

*Taxation:* The taxation was not heavy and not collected with rigour (II-100-29). It did not exceed one-sixth. There is no reference to frequent revision of taxation. As pointed

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<sup>1</sup>. See under Ministers in the earlier portion.

<sup>2</sup>. See his commentary on II-100-36.

out earlier the taxation was particularly light in the case of Brāhmaṇas and Kṣattriyas. The Śūdras probably paid the tax in the form of unpaid labour or *visti*.

*Tribute:* The tribute was called *Upahāra* or *Upāyana*.<sup>1</sup> The streets of Ayodhyā are described as being crowded with tributary kings bearing tributes to Daśaratha (I-5-14). Kings of Ayodhyā must probably have received tribute in grains, money, woollen goods and gems (II-10-35 and II-82-8).

Tributes received by Rāma consisted of gems, horses, carriages, elephants, sandal wood, jewels, pearls, corals, beautiful slave girls, woollen clothing and skins (of sheep), and chariots (VII-39-8, etc.). These were paid to the Regent when the king was away (II-115-27).

The Princes who were expected to bring tributes to the king in Ayodhyā were (II-82-8):

1. Kevala—Princes who did not rule
2. Aparānta—Foreign Princes
3. Sāmudra—Princes ruling beyond the seas.

The kings were expected to be clever in accumulating (*āyakarmaṇi upāyajñāḥ* and *saṃdṛṣṭa-vyaya-karma-vit*—II-1-26) wealth and to be conversant with the right methods of spending.

*Expenditure:* The kings spent their wealth on sacrifices and other religious rites, in feeding the Brāhmaṇas and guests, in maintaining their families and friends, and in strengthening the army (II-100-55).

There are no actual references to payments to various civil officers in the Rāmāyaṇa except in the case of Śuka and Sāraṇa, Rāvaṇa's ministers. Rāma attached much importance to the due distribution of the rations and the pay of the soldiers (II-100-32 f.). The existence of the various Tīrthas or Officers presupposes a machinery dealing with the collection of revenue and public expenditure.

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1. VII-39-8; 11-15; 11-15-46.



## CHAPTER VII

### ADMINISTRATION OF LAW AND JUSTICE

*Rājadharmā: Principles of Justice:* The administration of Rāma was according to Rājadharmā, established by tradition. Well-defined principles of Justice guided the ancient kings in their administration of justice. It was a well-observed rule that the innocent should not be punished without a trial (II-100-56, 59), as the tears of the innocent, when punished, would destroy the progeny and the prosperity of the rulers. It was the duty of the kings to see that the accused were not punished without an investigation by competent judges. The primary object of a king's rule was to do justice to his subjects (IV-17-32). It was equally his duty to see that the guilty did not escape punishment, on account of corrupt judges or other causes. Kings had to take care that their ministers and judges administered justice impartially in disputes between the powerful rich, and the helpless poor (II-100-58). The wealth of innocent people could neither be confiscated by the Government nor by the king.

*Judges:* The judges were called Dharmapālakas (VII-59L-32). They were chosen for their knowledge of Law and Politics (I-7-6 and 9). They were expected to be impartial and not to take bribes (I-7-13). Bharata mentions partiality as a great sin (II-75-57). Ministers with special knowledge of law sat with the king in the royal court of justice (VII-59K-3 and VII-59M-27 f.). Much importance was attached to impartiality and freedom from corruption (II-100-56, etc.). Rāma warned Bharata not to employ corrupt ministers (II-100-26). It must be borne in mind that the ministers were ex-officio members of the Court of Justice.

*The Supreme Court:* The Royal Court of Justice was in the Audience Chamber which was also the Assembly Hall of the Sabhā (VII-59K-1, etc.). All the subjects, men or women who had to prefer a complaint before the king, had the right of free audience when the king sat on his judgment seat every morning. (VII-53-5).

The Court probably sat every day. The chief business

transacted in the Court was to receive and consider the petitions of the people in regard to their grievances. It probably also discharged the functions of the Final Court of Appeal in the State.

*Office Hours of the Court of Justice:* Justice was administered in the forenoon after the performance of the morning rites and worship (VII-59K-1). Evidently the morning session was preferred on account of the tropical climate.

*Constitution of the Supreme Court of Justice:* Rāma's Court of Justice or the Supreme Court was presided over by himself (VII-59K-1). It was composed of the following members (VII-59K-2 and VII-59L-30, etc.):

1. Vasiṣṭha—the Purohita.
2. Brāhmaṇa Sages learned in the Dharma-śāstras and the interpretation of sacred and secular laws.
3. Sages, aged and experienced, with a knowledge of tradition and customs.
4. His ministers conversant with law (vyavahārajña and dharmapāraḡa) who knew the ways and means, and the difficulty or possibility of carrying out particular decisions, on account of their administrative experience. They would also be aware of the political consequences of the decisions.
5. Kṣātriya Counsellors, conversant with (nīti) politics to advise him on military questions, foreign policy, etc., and to look after the interests of the Kṣātriya class. The military officers were probably nominated to sit in the Court and the Council.
6. Nītijña-sabhyas—members of the Assembly, conversant with political science or Artha-śāstra.
7. Naigama or leading merchants to advise him on mercantile law and tradition, and to represent the interests of the commercial classes: (the Vaiśyas of the Trade Guilds).
8. His own brother—princes, evidently to guard the privileges of the Crown.

*Instantaneous Admission to Litigants and Petitioners:* It was the duty of every king to arrange for the instantaneous admission of every suitor who came to the Court of Justice



to get his grievances redressed. King Nṛga was cursed by two Brāhmaṇ suitors, who were kept waiting at his gates, without being admitted into his presence (VII-53-18). King Nimi, an ancestor of Śītā, was unfortunately sleeping on the day when Sage Vasiṣṭha approached to prefer a complaint. As Vasiṣṭha failed to get instantaneous admission, he cursed the king (VII-55-15, etc.). The people who had business in the King's Court of Justice, *i.e.*, parties or petitioners, were called Kāryārthins or Kāryins. The reputation of the Law Courts for speedy and even-handed justice, the direct admission into the Law Courts presided by the king, without the troubles of stamp fees, and lawyers; and the fear of speedy and condign punishment by the king, made the people respect each other's rights. Therefore Rāma's court had not much work to do (VII-59K-11).

The most noticeable points in the Legal Administration of Rāma were:

1. The ease with which justice could be had, without any expenditure.
  2. The absence of professional lawyers and stamp fees and a complicated machinery.
  3. The personal administration of justice by the king.
  4. The accessibility of the king.
  5. The speedy trial and impartial judgment.
  6. Very few litigations, as the people were terribly afraid of a stern impartial king administering speedy justice.
  7. The care with which the king selected his colleagues for their profound learning in various branches of law.
- Serious Crimes:* Some of the more serious crimes referred to, in the Epic are listed below:
- Treason
  - Perjury
  - Ravishing maidens
  - Abduction of others' wives
  - Misappropriation of trust property
  - Stealing or robbing

Killing a Brāhmaṇa.

Cheating servants of their promised wages

Running away from the battle field

Murder of infants, women, old men and kiṅgs<sup>1</sup>

Arson

Poisoning the water supply

Sullyng the preceptor's bed.

The punishments for such offences varied from imprisonment and torture to capital punishment (IV-55-10 and V-26-12). Thieves were punished with death (V-28-7). Executions were carried out in the mornings<sup>1</sup> (V-28-7).

## THE POLICE.

*Police for keeping the peace and regulating the traffic:* There is some evidence for the employment of the Police, in the thoroughfares to keep order. Hanumān saw in the streets of Lankā, in addition to the soldiers carrying various destructive weapons and arms, Daṇḍāyudhadharas, or men carrying truncheons or sticks (V-4-17). When the soldiers were all provided with dreadful destructive weapons there was no necessity to arm others with Daṇḍas or sticks. Evidently Daṇḍāyudhadhara just refer to the Police or the Military employed on police duty.

Again in VI-130-8, Bharata, King-Regent of Ayodhyā, when issuing orders for the reception of Rāma, who was returning from his exile, told Śatrughna that hundreds of people must keep the roads clear of the crowd. Evidently this is a reference to constables of traffic duty. The words Bandhana (IV-55-10) and Baddha (V-28-7) presuppose the existence of jails and police.

Again as Aṅgada speaks of imprisonment and methods of torture (IV-55-10 f.), the existence of the Police Department and the existence of the practice of torture might certainly be presumed.

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<sup>1</sup> Sita refers to the killing of thieves by the Government at the end of the night, i.e., early morning.



*Torture:* Torture was certainly practised on prisoners by the Police. Torture under the orders of the kings was not uncommon. Aṅgada cried in anguish that he would certainly be tortured or imprisoned in secret dungeons by his uncle, if he returned without finding Sītā's whereabouts (IV-55-10). If the Crown Prince was in dread of it, the practice must certainly have been fairly common. Sītā referred to various forms of torture in vogue, while lamenting her lot in the Aśoka-vana; she resolved not to submit to Rāvaṇa though tortured in various ways (V-26-12). Cutting the body into two pieces, tearing the body to pieces, cutting off the body limb by limb, roasting the prisoner in the fire, are some of the tortures referred to by Sītā (V-26-12). Throttling was also one of the methods of killing the prisoners. 'Let us throttle Sītā if she does not submit to Rāvaṇa's solicitations', said the Rākṣasi guards of Sītā (V-24-40).

## INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT

*Spies and Spying in Civil Administration:* Kings depended very largely on the information of spies, for the administration of the kingdom. The employment of spies was recognised and recommended by ancient Indian political writers. Daśaratha, Rāma, Vāli, Rāvaṇa—all of them, employed spies to a large extent. In Ayodhyā there was a regular department of spies which corresponded to the present-day Criminal Investigation Department of India and the Detective Services of European States. Daśaratha's ministers kept themselves well informed of all the doings of the enemies, and their intentions and projects, by Cāras or spies (I-7-8). The spy was supposed to be an extra eye of kings. Rāma asked Bharata when he met him at Citrakūṭa, whether he was keeping himself informed of the actions of his officials and ministers by means of spies or Cārakas (II-100-36).

Aṅgada, son of Vāli, employed spies in Kiṣkindhā (IV-15-16).

## Administration of Law and Justice

The spies were divided into two classes:

1. Those in the Civil Services, and
2. Those in the Military Services.

The former must have been a well-constituted C. I. D. service. The spies or detectives (Cāra or Praṇidhi or Cārika or Cāraṇa) were used not only to spy on the enemy's forces but also on the king's own citizens and officers (II-100-36).

Rāvaṇa had innumerable spies moving about the centre of his fort and mixing innocently with the people and the soldiers (V-4-15). Rāma made use of spies to a great extent, to find out the views and actions, and the gossip of his citizens in the streets, houses, parks, etc., in the city and the kingdom (VII-43-4, etc.). He learnt of the public scandal about Sītā through the spies. Spies were employed also to shadow the various Tīrthas or officials.

## APPENDIX TO THE CHAPTER ON LAW.

Some of the legal terms met with in the Rāmāyaṇa are:

Law—Vyavahāra (VII-59 L-9)

One conversant with law or jurist—Vyavahārajña (VII-59 K-3)

Politics (including foreign policy)—Nīti (VII-59 K-3)

Moral Law—Dharma (VII-59 K-3)

Justice—Rājadharmā (VII-59 K-2)

Judges—Dharmapālaka (VII-59 K-1)

Parties or Plaintiffs—Kāryārthin or Kāryin (VII-59-5f.)

Punishment—Daṇḍa (VII-59L-31)

Members of the Court—Sabhāsad or Sabhya (VII-59 M-33)

Legacy or gift—Saṃpradāna (IV-11-34 and VII-64-5)

Redemption—Niṣkraya (I-14-47)

Suitors or Petitioners—Kāryārthin (VII-53-24)



## CHAPTER VIII

### LOCAL ADMINISTRATION — MUNICIPAL

*Divisions of the Country:* The Province or Country or the dominion of the king was called Visaya (I-7-11 and I-10-28) or Desa (I-5-14 and II-68-13) or Janapada (I-5-5 and IV-42-6). Desa was a geographical unit. The kingdom was called Rajya (II-2-4, II-50-11, II-97-6 and II-98-9). Rajya was a political unit. The neighbouring kingdoms were the Samanta-rajyas (I-7-21). The foreign country was called Videsa (I-7-16).

The kingdom was divided into two parts, the Pura, or the metropolis, and the Rastra or Janapada; <sup>1</sup> the rest of the country (II-34-54 f.). Rama when renouncing the kingdom in favour of Bharata referred to this division into Rastra which included hills, forests, and agricultural lands, and Pura, the metropolis.

As the metropolis was always the military headquarters, and was consequently fortified, it was also known as a Durga or fortress (VI-3-22). The Pura or the metropolis was also called Puri (I-5-6 and 9, I-45-8, I-32-5 f., II-68-16, II-69-1 and IV-41-36), Nagara (I-11-19 and 24, I-10-8), Nagari (I-5-6, II-5-18 and VI-3-29), Mahapuri (I-5-7 and III-47-28), Pura-vara (I-6-6, I-7-17 and II-2-49), Purottama (I-6-7 and 18, II-14-26), Puh (VI-3-22), or Rajadhani (II-51-23).

*Pura and Rāṣṭra — Urban and Rural:* The capital of the Province was Pura; — the city. The rest of the Province was the Rastra or Janapada. Janapada and Rastra are also used in the Epic to denote the whole country including the capital (I-5-5 and II-50-4). The Desa or Janapada (or Province) included the capital or Pura, and the Rastra the rest of the Province; the Rastra included the Provincial towns (Pattanas — IV-40-21).<sup>2</sup> Nagaras larger provincial towns (II-1-45 and II-57-4), and the rural parts consisting of Gramas or agricultural villages (II-57-4 and II-49-3), Mahagramas (IV-40-21) larger villages Chosas or pastoral villages (II—83—15), Saila or Hills (II—34—35), Kanana or forests (II—34—55), Khani or mines (II—100—45), and Durgas or Forts (II—100—53).

1. Other references to this division: (I-3-36, I-7-13f., 18-4 and 42, II-2-49, II-14-56 and II-34-54).

2. There seem to be different types of towns according to the Manasara book; Acharya the translator, thinks that Pattana must have meant a big commercial port, on the banks of the sea or a river and always engaged in exchange and commerce with the foreigners. (P.K. Acharya: *Indian Architecture*, p.40)

Many kinds of forts were recognised:—Nādeya, Pārvata, Vanya and Kṛtrima-sthala-durga (VI—3—7 and 20, I—5—13).

The term Nāgara though sometimes applied to the city of Ayodhyā was more often confined to the provincial towns (II—1—45) surrounded by the Grāmas and Ghoṣas. The Royal charioteer Sumantra when returning to Ayodhyā after leaving Rāma in the forest is said to have passed through many Grāmas and Nagaras (II—57—4): The residential quarters in the Grāmas were called Grāma-saṃvāsas (II—49—4 and 9). The agricultural villages were the Grāmas. Rāma is said to have passed through “grāmān vikṛṣṭa-sīmāntān” (II—49—3) on his way to the forest.

The subjects were spoken of as Viśaḥ (I—11—9 and II—2—28). The subjects residing in the capital or Pura were called Paurāḥ or Paurajana and the people of the country Janapada or Janapada-jana (II—2—49). The residents of the provincial towns or Nagaras were the nānā-nagara-vāstavyas referred to in II—1—45.

Ayodhyā province must have consisted of Nagaras, Pattanas, Grāmas and Ghoṣas (agriculture and cattle rearing were the chief occupations).

The Nagaras (larger provincial towns) must have been occupied by the wealthy, cultured and leisured classes in the mofussil. The term Nāgarika in Sanskrit means refined or courtly, as town-bred people are generally polite and courtly.

The Pattanas were probably the smaller mofussil towns, which must have been the trade centres for the neighbouring villages. Their inhabitants were probably petty merchants and artisans.

*Local Self-Government in the rural parts:* Rāma when going on exile, was driven in his coach and four, right through the kingdom of Ayodhyā to the banks of the Ganges. It can therefore be presumed that the roads at least the major ones were excellent right through the dominions. The local bodies must have maintained these fine roads. Rāma when going out of the kingdom to the banks of the Gaṅgā, and Sumantra when returning to Ayodhyā are said to have come across many towns, villages, tanks, lakes, and well-ploughed



agricultural fields. In Ayodhyā<sup>1</sup> the fields were all well irrigated by rivers, tanks and lakes. Rama refers to Ayodhya as being cultivated by irrigation channels, and not by rainfall (adevamātrka—II—100—45). During the Rāmāyaṇa period, there might have been two kinds of crops, as in the present—day, the dry crops depending on the rain, and the wet crops depending on extensive irrigation channels and rivers. Kośala being in the Gangetic delta, the fields in the kingdom grew wet crops all over. Hence the country must have had a network of irrigation channels. The construction and maintenance of such channels presupposes a machinery for it. The roads and the irrigation works must have been looked after by the provincial unions or local corporations the “Grāmas” and the “Ghoṣas” and the “Pattanas” and the “Nagaras”. These words which originally meant agricultural villages, pastoral villages and the provincial towns, might also refer to the corporations of the villages and the corporations were known as Grāma-ghoṣa-mahattaras. The Presidents of these provincial Nagaras are the persons referred to in II—1—45 as nānā-nagara-vāstavyas. These Grāma-mahattaras, Ghoṣa-mahattaras and Nagara-vāstavyas represented the political interests of their corporations in the General Popular Assembly or Pariṣad or Sabhā, under the collective name of “Jānapada.” They evidently resided in the capital or Pura for a large part of the year, to attend the various meetings of the Assembly. They are referred to as Purālayas in II—1—50, i.e., as residing in the city. Even at the present-day in British India many small provincial towns are more or less big Grāmas or villages. Grāma-mahattarāḥ might have included the presidents of the petty Nagaras also. The members of the Janapada consisting of the Presidents of the Grāmas and the Ghoṣas were called Mahattaras and not Mahāntaḥ. Why is the comparative word used? Evidently there were Mahāntaḥ also who were probably Deputy Presidents, to look after the business of the village organisations during the absence of the Mahāttaras, in the capital. It has already been stated that the Jānapada co-operated with a similar Paura body of the city

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<sup>1</sup> Here the dominion of the Ayodhya Kings is referred to not merely the metropolis.

under the collective name of—"Paura-jānapada." The terms Grāma and Ghoṣa may refer to the territorial units (villages) or the political units (the village organisations) as suggested by Jayaswal.<sup>1</sup> It may be interpreted that the Bāhya (outer) section of the Jānapada body looked after the local interests (mainly municipal and economical), while the Ābhyantara section, a selected body represented the political interests of the rural parts.

We do not come across the term Grāmaṇī in the Rāmāyaṇa in the sense of the Village Head. The King's executive officers, or Collectors in the provinces or districts were called Janapadeśvaras (VII-37-16).

*City Municipal Administration:* The city of Ayodhyā (Metropolis or Pura) was of great extent, 12 yojanas by 3 yojanas (I-5-7). It was a huge fort and the headquarters of the Government and the Army. The king, nobles and wealthy merchants lived in it. The Assembly meetings were held in the city. The princes and all the members of the assembly lived there, more or less permanently. So the capital loomed large in the eyes of the politicians, and the metropolis was treated as a separate political unit, in the administration.

So far as the local administration of the metropolis was concerned everything was probably managed by the various local bodies: (1) trade unions or Gaṇas with their presidents and (2) the municipal corporation—Paura with its municipal councillors or Śreni-mukhyas and its president.

*Paura—The City Corporation:* In the city or capital, the corporation which administered its local affairs was called the Paura. Municipal administration of the capital was Paura-kārya. The Crown Prince Rāma helped Daśaratha in Paura-kārya after his marriage (I-77-25). The king or the Crown Prince was perhaps the ex-officio president of the city corporation. The city was occupied by the Kṣātriya (military) officers, the great Vaiśya merchant princes, the various artisans (most probably Vaiśyas too), a few Brāhmaṇas living on the king's bounty, the Sūdras employed in menial work and the Dāsas or the slaves.

<sup>1</sup> *Hindu Polity*, p. 68, S. 252.



*Official Control of the City Municipality:* The city administration was not entirely non-official, as Daśaratha's ministers are said to have treated the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣattriyas considerably in the matter of taxation (I-7-12). The Brāhmaṇas and Kṣattriyas were let off lightly on account of their services on behalf of learning and the defence of the country. Moreover they could not and did not engage in trade. The Śūdras probably paid taxes in the form of Viṣṭi or unpaid labour without wages, when sent for, by the authorities. 'Viṣṭi' was certainly well recognised during the Rāmāyaṇa period (VI-130-4). The bulk of the citizens in the Pura, who had rights and property were the trading Vaiśyas. They were the Naigamas or the important citizens. They were also Naigamas, in another sense—the important merchants associated in Guilds. The big merchants probably incorporated themselves as the Chamber of Commerce, and the petty traders and artisans incorporated themselves into Gaṇas under the presidency of the Gaṇa-vallabhas. The chief citizens of the Pura were naturally the big merchants. For municipal purposes the city was divided into wards, each with a councillor Śreṇi-mukhya. All the Śreṇi-mukhyas formed the Corporation. Govindarāja interprets Śreṇi-mukhyas (II-26-14) as Vīthī-pradhānas or the Ward Councillors or the City Fathers. The word is always used in the plural in the Rāmāyaṇa. Just as in modern times, the City Fathers have to be present at public functions, *e.g.*, Royal welcome, the City Fathers of Ayodhyā had to be present at the public functions, *e.g.*, on the occasion of Rāma's coronation and on the occasion of Rāma's return from exile (VI-130-9 and 16). Bharata in welcoming Rāma who returned after his exile is described as being surrounded by Śreṇi-mukhyas, Naigamas, Ministers, Brāhmaṇas, etc. The term Naigama refers to the merchants of the Guilds. Therefore the Śreṇi-mukhyas must refer to the City Fathers or Municipal Councillors as interpreted by Govindarāja.

A distinction has to be made between the Naigama organisation and the Paura organisation. The Naigama organisation was the Chamber of Commerce and the Paura the Municipal Corporation. The term 'Paura' was also applied to the representatives of the city in the Sabhā. The same set of merchants

might have worked in both organisations. The Village Unions in the rural tracts, must have resembled the Paura municipal corporation on a small scale.

*Functions of the Municipality:* The various branches of municipal work carried out during the Rāmāyaṇa period may be summarised as follows:

1. Town planning: (I-5-16 and 19, V-4-8 etc., V-53-19 etc., VI-3-11 etc., VII-70-11 etc., and VII-101-13 f.).

2. Roads: The roads had to be kept in good order (VI-130-5).

3. Water supply: There was an ample supply of pure water, sweet, clear and limpid like the juice of the sugar cane (I-5-17). The provision of sufficient pure water for a large town like Ayodhyā was no mean task.

The water supply of Ayodhyā must have been excellent. Ayodhyā is stated to have had an unfailing supply of pure water (I-5-17). The water was kept free from pollution by the people considering it a sin. The sin of polluting the drinking water was considered equivalent to the sin of poisoning the people (II-75-54). As the ideal water is described as being clear and limpid (I-5-17 and II-91-15), some sort of filtration must have been carried out.

The usual sources of water supply were:

Rivers, lakes, tanks, ponds, wells and springs (II-15-5 f.).

River—Sarit, Nadī and Nada.

Cascades—Prasravana.

Mountain torrents—Nirjhara.

These are referred to in the text.

Tanks—Vāpī.

Wells—Kūpa.

Deep ponds—Taḍakā.

Small pond—Palvala.

Lake—Saras.

Fountain or Spring—Udbheda.

and Lotus pond—Nalinī.

are referred to  
in the text



Though there were many sources, river water must have been preferred. Towns were located on the banks of rivers, *e.g.*, the Sarayū, the Narmadā, the Ganges, etc.

4. Conservancy: The Roads were daily swept, well-watered, and fumigated with Agarū, Sandalwood, etc. (I-5-8 and I-11-24).

5. Lighting: The streets were supplied with lamp posts or *dīpavrkṣa* (II-6-18).

6. Public Buildings: The town was well supplied with Town Halls (II-6-13 and 20). The Paura body must have had charge of the temples, the places of worship near the crossroads, and the Caityas.

7. Regulation of Traffic: Regulation of traffic in the crowded roads by constables (with batons) on traffic duty (V-4-17 and VI-130-8) was not unknown.

8. Decorations for beautifying the city: The decoration of the city on occasions of public festivities (I-11-25, 27 and VI-130-2) was ordered by the king.

9. Provision of Parks: Provision of groves and parks for the recreation of the citizens (I-5-12, II-67-17 and II-71-23, 26) must have been one of the activities of the Municipal Corporation.

When Daśaratha was returning to Ayodhyā, with the sage Ṛśyaśṛṅga and Śāntā, from Aṅgadeśa, he sent word in advance to have the city decorated, swept, watered and fumigated, to give a royal welcome to Ṛśyaśṛṅga (I-11-25).

In the case of large towns like Ayodhyā, water supply, maintenance of roads, conservancy, street lighting, the supervision of the bazaars, etc., must have necessitated the existence of a corporate body like the municipal corporation to look after the civic affairs.

The corporation was represented by the city fathers at all public functions, *e.g.*, coronation, royal welcome, etc., as explained earlier. The Paura was partly a political body and partly a municipal body. As the Bali sad bhaga taken by the king was mainly intended as his wages for protecting the

subjects, the corporation must have had its own sources of taxation and a special machinery to collect. In this connection a few remarks may be made on the term Naigama frequently referred to.

Naigama was either the city municipal corporation or the corporate association of guild merchants of the capital. Vasiṣṭha is described as waiting at the palace gate on the coronation day of Rāma, with the Paura-Jānapada and Naigamas and Brāhmaṇas (II-14-54). In this context we may interpret Naigama as the Chamber of Commerce or members of some Trading Corporation or the City Corporation. On ceremonial occasions the members of the Sabhā and the members of the City corporation as leading citizens, might naturally be expected to be present. But Naigamas might also mean the merchant princes in their individual capacity as leading citizens and not as representatives of any corporation (II-15-25). These are the same people who are described as "nigamasya mukhyāḥ" or the chief citizens in the city (II-15-2).

It must be remembered that the term Nigama may mean city or merchant. The word Naigama may mean the corporation of either the citizens or merchants. The Naigamas who partook in the consecration ceremony of Rāma were of course the leading Vaiśya merchants of Ayodhyā, either in the capacity of members of the "Chamber of Commerce" or in the capacity of members of the Paura or city corporation. The leading merchants, as has been pointed out previously, naturally sat in both these corporate bodies, one dealing with trade interests and the other with municipal interests.



## CHAPTER IX

### MILITARY ORGANISATION AND WARS

It has already been stated that India, during the Rāmāyana period, was split up into a number of small independent or semi-independent states. Many of these states banded themselves together or 'mutual protection into a 'Statal Circle' or 'Maṇḍalam' (Confederacy of States), although it meant that a certain amount of independence had to be surrendered to the most powerful state in the set (II—100—69).

The keynote of the foreign policy of the various states in ancient India was the maintenance of the "Balance of power", as the present day.

The ancient kings were noted for their valour and proficiency in military science and art. All the princes received, in addition to their intellectual education (in the Scriptures, Politics, Dhanurveda, etc.) a practical training in the various methods of fighting.

Trained princes commanded the forces themselves and led the army in the battles, .e.g., Rāma, Sugrīva and Rāvaṇa.

*Military Department:* The king administered the military department<sup>1</sup> with the help of his ministers. All the Cabinet ministers of Daśaratha are described as Dṛḍha-vikramāḥ, Yuktāḥ Balasya ca parigrahe and vīraḥ (I—7—6, 10 and 11)—. Evidently there was collective responsibility of the Cabinet, in military matters. It must be noted that although the king received advice from his ministers, he was the ultimate authority in declaring war and peace.

(There must have been a special minister, in charge of the military portfolio in Laṅkā. Vibhīṣaṇa when advising Rāvaṇa in the War Council (VI—14—22) pointed out that the minister must know the strength of his own state, and the position, progress, or decline of the enemy state and of his own, and that he must ponder well and advise on what was proper and conducive for the welfare of the king).

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of Ravana, the members of the War Council were all Generals. They were both ministers of the Cabinet and Generals of the army. Prahasta, Ravana's Commander-in-Chief was one of this War Cabinet.

*Causes of War: Wars were waged:*

(1) for compelling the sovereigns of various states to acknowledge one's supremacy, as in the case of Rāvaṇa's digvijaya;

(2) for rescuing imprisoned maidens and ridding the world of cruel tyrants, as in the case of Rāma's fight with Rāvana;

(3) for vengeance: Paraśurāma resolved to root out the Kṣatriyas as one of them murdered his father;

(4) for love of territory. Rāma waged war against the kings of Gāṇḍhāra, Kārupatha and Candrakānta and annexed their territories (VII-100-10 ff. and VII-102-3, etc.);

(5) for punishing neighbouring kings guilty of misrule—like Lavaṇāśura. Lavaṇā's kingdom was invaded and annexed by Śatrughna under Rāmā's orders (VII-61-18, etc. and VII-64-7, etc.; VII-70-7, etc.);

(6) for helping the allies—Sugrīva and the Vānaras fought as allies of Rāma in the Rāma-Rāvaṇa battle;

(7) for the sake of women. Vālī fought with Māyāvī for a woman's sake (IV-9-5). And Janaka was attacked by the disappointed princes who failed to secure Sītā's hand (I-66-20, etc.);

(8) for the sake of land, gold and silver (IV-17-31) (as pointed out by Vālī on his deathbed, to Rāma).

*Preparedness for War:* The forces were generally concentrated in the capital which was a well fortified fort, always prepared for a siege. Some of the forces were posted at the frontiers and were in charge of Antapālas. Ayodhyā was surrounded with a deep unfordable moat all round, and guarded by huge gates and towers (II-100-40 and 53, I-5-10 ff.). It was well furnished with all kinds of weapons, and was kept well supplied with ample stores of rice, paddy, good drinking water and all kinds of commodities (I-5-17). It was full of brave and famous Generals, soldiers, horses, elephants and mechanics. It may be noted here that the town was full of Kūṭāgāras. These were probably cellars or subterranean passages and rooms for the hiding of soldiers (I-5-15 ff.). Laṅkā was also furnished with many Kuṭāgāras—



V-9-14, 19). The very word Ayodhyā meant impregnable or unassailable (II-100-40 and I-5-10, etc.).

*Forts—Varieties of:* Different kinds of forts were distributed throughout Kosala. Rāma advised Bharata to maintain them in proper condition (II-100-53). The forts were maintained in such a way as to be prepared for a siege at any time. They were all well furnished with money, food grains, arms, fighting machinery, artisans, archers and a good supply of water. The various kinds of forts were:— (VI-3-20):—

1. Nādeya—surrounded by the sea or a river, *e.g.*, Laṅkā.
2. Pārvata—surrounded by hills, through which an entrance was excavated as in the case of Kiṣkindhā.
3. Vānya—surrounded by dense forests, *e.g.*, Laṅkā.
4. Kṛtrima—artificially fortified, with ramparts, moats, etc., like Ayodhyā, Laṅkā and Samkāśī (I-5-10, etc., VI-3-10, etc., and I-70-3).

The fortification of Laṅkā illustrates the various methods of defences adopted in ancient India.

*Fortification of Laṅkā:* Laṅkā was a city that was extraordinarily well fortified. It is worthwhile pointing out the many interesting features of Laṅkā. It was particularly well situated and constructed, so as to make it thoroughly unassailable.

1. It was protected by the sea allround. Being an island, separated from the mainland by 100 yojanas, its first line of defence was the sea. It was a Jala-durga or Nādeya fort.

2. It was located on the top of Trikūṭa, an inaccessible mountain, whose sides had been made unscaleable by chiselling, so as to afford no foothold in climbing. It was a Giri-durga (VII-5-22).

3. The fortress was surrounded by dense forests. It was a Vana-durga as well.

4. It was also artificially fortified. Therefore it was also a Sthala-durga or Kṛtrima-durga (V-2-14, etc. and VI-3-11, etc.).

The fort was surrounded by a very deep moat, filled with dreadful crocodiles; and by mighty unassailable rampart walls. It had four wide entrances or giant gates on the four sides. The fort gates were furnished with massive iron bolts, and were guarded by steel Śataghñīs<sup>1</sup> (cannons) and huge engines for throwing stones and arrows at the enemy (Iṣūpala-yantra) mounted on the gate towers.

Inside the rampart wall was the roadway called the Prākāra encircling the fort. The approaches to the fort on the four sides were by drawbridges (saṃkramas) for the ingress and egress of troops. The drawbridges were furnished with machinery to throw the assaulting forces into the moat. One of them was particularly large, and strong and contained a platform supported on pillars. The eastern gate was protected by thousands of soldiers armed with sword and lance. The southern gate was guarded by a four-fold army of picked soldiers. The western gate was guarded by innumerable archers armed with bows and swords. The northern gate was guarded by the major portion of the army. (As India was on the north of Laṅkā, this gate was particularly well guarded.) The centre of the fort was well defended by soldiers of great prowess (VI—3—10, etc.). The fort was full of arsenals, and was well stocked with various kinds of weapons and engines of destruction. The "Conning Towers" or observation towers, called Caityas, and occupied by guards or Caityapālas (V—43—13), were probably situated in the crossways. There were also other conning towers over the main gateways, and on the top of the palace situated in the centre of the fort. The whole fort was always resonant with the sound of trumpets, conches, and military drums.

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<sup>1</sup>The Sataghni was a weapon intended to kill 100 people at a time. The weapon has been described in different ways by different writers. It must have been something of the nature of the modern field guns.

The words "Sataghni, Yantra", etc.; used in the Epic period are interpreted by some in the sense of mechanisms for throwing stones. Others regard them as exact equivalents of cannons and guns. The former class is led mainly by Prof. E.W. Hopkins, and the latter by Dr. Gustav Oppert. *The Art of War in Ancient India* by G.T. Date, p.36.



Sentinels were posted at the gates to challenge visitors. Many spies were always scattered throughout the city (V-4-15). The chief places in the fort where forces were stationed were: Caitya, Gopura, Prākārā, Dvāra and Madhyama-skandha (VI-60-12, 15 and VI-3-28).

*Forces of Various Types:* The different kinds of forces (VI-17-24) recognised, according to Sugrīva were:

1. Mitra-bala or soldiers of allies.
2. Āṭavī-bala or soldiers drawn from forest tribes.
3. Maula-bala or hereditary soldiers—the Standing Army.
4. Bhṛtya-bala or mercenary soldiers.
5. Dviṣad-bala composed of deserters from the enemy.

*Defences:* The chief defences of the kingdom were the army, well maintained forts, and contented subjects.

*The Army:* The army consisted of (1) the combatants of four kinds (four-fold army), (2) the Pioneers or Sappers and Miners, and (3) the Commissariat Department (including the camp followers). The four-fold army consisting of four arms, viz., infantry, cavalry, elephant section and chariot section was called Catur-aṅga-sainyam or Catur-aṅga-balam (I-69-3 and VI-3-25).

Bharata's army consisted of these four kinds (II-83-1, etc.). Rāvaṇa's army in Janasthāna must have also consisted of these four kinds (III-25-21, etc.), as Rāma is described as slaughtering all the four classes of soldiers<sup>1</sup>. Rāvaṇa's main army at Laṅkā consisted of the usual four units (V-46-17). He is stated to have had some regiments of camels and asses also (VI-53-5).

The infantry soldiers were of two kinds: one fighting with sword and lance (VI-3-24), and the other fighting with bow, sword and bucklers, and skilled in the use of all Astras (VI-3-26).

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<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that in the case of Dasaratha's army the soldiers (Yodhas or Bhatas) (II-92-25 and I-54-3 and 7) formed a separate warrior caste (the Ksattriyas set apart for fighting). In the case of Lanka and Kiskindha every male was a soldier. There was no separate class of fighters.

The cavalry soldiers were the Sādiṇah, and the elephant soldiers the Gajārohas (III-25-21)

As for the elephant section, we can make out that some heroes fought from the back of elephants (like Mahodara—VI-69-20), and that the elephants were specially trained to fight (gajan para-gajārujān—V-6-30).

*Functions of the Four Limbs of the Army:* Vālmīki's description of the parts played by the different units is not quite clear. All his enthusiasm is reserved for the description of the car-warriors or chariot-warriors and the great infantry soldiers. The Rāma-Rāvaṇa battle was mainly a fight between the chariot-warriors of Rāvaṇa and Rāma while the infantry on both sides kept up a side show. Vālmīki makes only a passing reference to the part played by the cavalry, and the elephant, camel ass sections (VI-52-2, etc.).

*Car-warriors or Chariot Warriors:* All the well-known warriors were chariot fighters (rathin-s). They were all able to fight on foot, or on horse-back (VI-69-29 and VI-71-29), or on elephants (VI-59-14, 17), or on chariots (VI-59-112), or on bulls (VI-59-19). The picked warriors Atirathas and Mahārathas could fight with many foes at the same time (I-5-22, I-39-6, I-42-21, II-1-29, II-50-26, II-52-3, V-6-7, VI-59-67 and VI-100-6). The chief and favourite weapons of these car-warriors were the long bows and arrows. They were the heroes most dreaded by foes, not only on account of their proficiency in all methods of warfare, but also on account of their knowledge of Astras or special missiles. The chariot warriors before ascending the chariot, used to circumambulate it and bow before it (VI-53-7, VI-78-8, VI-103, 17). Heroes like Prahasta and Indrajit used to worship and pray before issuing for battle (VI-57-21, VI-73-20. ff. and VI-80-6 ff.). The warriors used to fight standing on the floor of the chariot so that they could shoot over the heads of the charioteers. (When Rāvaṇa was staggered by a blow of Hanumān, he is said to have sat down on the chariot—rāthopasthe upāviśat.) (VI-59-112.)

All the car-warriors were invariably good charioteers. Charioteering and riding were common accomplishments



acquired by them in their youth (I-18-24). When Indrajit's charioteer was killed by Lakṣmaṇa, Indrajit himself steered the chariot and fought at the same time to the great wonder of every body (VI-90-42). The issues of the battle were staked on the success of the chariot heroes. The chariot section formed the most important limb of the army.

*The War Chariots:* The war chariot was called Sāṃgrāmika-ratha (III-64-44). The chariots must have been fairly huge, as some of the heroes used to carry a very large supply of arms of all sorts (V-47-5, VI-58-6, VI-71-12 ff. and VI-108-2). They were drawn by four to eight powerful highly trained horses (V-47-4, V-46-27, VI-96-33 and III-27-14) and driven by skilled charioteers (Atikāya's chariot had four drivers—VI-71-17, etc.), specially trained in the science and art of charioteering. The intelligent movements of Indrajit's horses in the battlefield after the slaughter of the charioteer by Lakṣmaṇa evoked much admiration (VI-91-28).

Sometimes the chariots were drawn by asses (V-44-8, VI-51-26 and VI-69-4).

The War Chariots were highly ornamented and were adorned with silver, gold and ivory, and fitted with hoods made of the skins of tigers and lions. They resounded with the tinkling of the attached bells (V-6-6 and VI-33-26). The War Chariots were fitted with Jāla (tassels or nets)—the respective banners of the Generals, and with the royal umbrella in the case of kings (VI-59-133). The chariot of Rāvaṇa carried two attendants or Cāmara-grāhins (chourie holders) (III-64-47).

*Charioteering:* Charioteering was a hereditary profession. Driving a war chariot was a special art requiring special training, great skill, resourcefulness and practice. Rāvaṇa's charioteer describes the qualifications of a charioteer in VI-106)10, etc. A charioteer should be conversant with season and place, omens, and expressions of emotions (such as the depression of spirits, exhilaration or grief of the warriors). He should have a knowledge of levels, and the suitable time for fighting. He should be able to perceive the shortcomings of the enemy. A charioteer should know when

to draw near an enemy, when to turn away from him, when to stay, and when to turn round the foe. The position of the charioteer was an honourable one. He was a driver as well as an adviser to the car-warrior. He was a source of encouragement in adversity.

(2) *Pioneers— Sappers and Miners*: This section had to prepare the marching routes and look after the construction of roads, camps, etc. It contained various kinds of artisans and engineers (II-79-13 and II-80-1, etc.). This division included:—

- Rakṣin—regiments to protect the workers going ahead
- Durga-vicāraka—surveyors (or guides).
- Bhūmi-pradeśa-jña—people conversant with the routes.
- Sūtra-karma-viśārada—civil engineers.
- Khanaka—diggers or miners.
- Yantraka—hydraulic engineers.
- Karmāntika—day labourers or coolies.
- Sthapati—wheelwrights or architects.
- Puruṣa—men in charge of cooly gangs.
- Yantra-kovida—mechanical engineers.
- Vardhaki—carpenters.
- Mārgin—levellers.
- Vṛkṣa-takṣaka—wood-cutters.
- Kūpa-kāra—well diggers.
- Sudhā-kāra—painters (for white washing).
- Vaṃśa-karmakṛt—workers in bamboo or makers of wickerware.
- Draṣṭā—supervisors.
- Vartma-karma-kovida—road makers.

(3) *Commissariat*: The Army on the march used to be accompanied by bazaars and the commissariat department, which was responsible for catering and for the transport of waggons, animals, and various commodities (VII-64-3, etc.). Money and food supplies were carried with the army (II-36-2, etc. and VII-64-3 f.). The commissariat department used waggons drawn by horses, or bulls, and pack animals (horses, asses, camels and bulls—II-83-16 and 19) for transport.



*Camp followers:* The camp followers consisted of traders, soldiers', wives, servants and courtesans (II-36-2 f., II-91-63 and II-83-15). Sufficient environment was thus created to make the soldiers feel that they were among their kith and kin.

*The Ideal Soldier:* The accomplishments of an ideal soldier, were as follows (VI-71-28, etc. and VI-71-44): He was expected to be conversant with all the Vedas and Astras. He was trained to fight on elephants, horses and on chariots. He had to wield the sword and draw the bow. He had to be conversant with Sāma, Dāna, Bheda and Daṇḍa and Politics (VI-71-28 f. and 44 ff.). He was not to slay persons who were unwilling to fight (VI-71-44).

*Soldiers and Marriage:* In Ayodhyā, Laṅkā and in Kiskindhā, the soldiers were usually married (II-82-25, VI-75-15, etc. and VI-66-19). The enlistment of married soldiers was productive of stability in the army; for married soldiers would fight not only for the king and the country but also for their own homes.

*Soldiers and Kind Treatment:* It was always the policy of commanders to keep the soldiers contented and pleased, by gifts and kind words (VII-64-5, etc.). Rāma specially advised Bharata to attend to the regular distribution of rations and pay to the soldiers, as they would be otherwise discontented (II-100-32, etc.). Unless soldiers be kept perfectly contented and treated considerably they would not be prepared to die in the service of the king.

*Soldiers and Booty:* Soldiers used to be presented with gifts and a share of the booty after the war, as they risked their lives when fighting for the king. Rāma told Vibhīṣaṇa after killing Rāvaṇa, to reward the Vānaras with gems and wealth of various kinds as a mark of his gratitude (VI-125-4, etc.).

(When suggesting to Vibhīṣaṇa the distribution of largess to the Vānara soldiers, Rāma stated that they deserved the reward for their services, and that soldiers would desert a cruel master destitute of generosity.)

*Soldiers' Syces:* The soldiers' horses and elephants were attended to by syces—Vāhanapālakas and Haṣṭyadhyakāṣas

(II-91-54 and VI-75-26). The syces of cavalry horses were called *Aśvabandha* and the syces of the fighting elephants were called *Kuñjara-grāha* (II-91-56). The soldiers had evidently attendants to look after the mounts—horses and elephants. The business of the soldiers was only to fight.

*Soldiers' Homes and Comforts:* The soldiers' homes were luxuriously fitted up. The soldiers' homes in Lanka were furnished with sandal and other fragrant woods used for incense and unguents, with costly pearls, gems, diamonds and corals, with clothing of various sorts (cotton, linen, silk, and wool), with vessels of gold and silver, with various furniture, utensils, trappings and ornaments of war horses, cords for tying elephants, neck ornaments of elephants, burnished ornaments and fittings of cars, blankets, chouries, tiger skin, musk, armours of warriors, armours for horses and elephants, weapons of various kinds, swords, bows, bow-strings, mace and lance, arrows, tomaras or iron clubs, goads of elephants, darts, liquor, costly beds, birds in cages, etc. (VI-75-7, etc.). The houses were well furnished mansions with lattice windows, inlaid with gems and corals.

There is no direct description regarding the comforts of soldiers in Ayodhyā. But from the nature of the comforts provided by the Sage Bharadvāja (II-91-52 ff.), to Bharata's soldiers in Citrakūṭa, we may infer what they must have been in Ayodhyā. The soldiers led a luxurious life. They had female servants to attend to their toilette (II-91-52 f.). They were accustomed to the use of bathing powders, tooth brushes, collyrium for the eyes, sandal and other sweet-smelling unguents and pastes, mirrors, combs, wooden sandals, etc. (II-91-74, etc.).

*Soldiers and Drink:* Soldiers all over the world in all ages have been fond of drink. Sage Bharadvāja, being aware of this weakness, supplied the soldiers of Bharata with plenty of liquor during his entertainment (II-91-15 and II-91-51). And Sage Vasiṣṭha supplied plenty of drink to Viśvāmītra's soldiers when entertaining the army (I-53-2).

Ravana's soldiers were drunk (with the liquor called *Śidhu*) when Sugrīva set fire to Laṅkā during the assault (VI-75-14, etc.). The female soldiers in the Aśoka-vana in Laṅkā used to drink and dance (V-24-45, etc. and V-17-16). Soldiers drank before battle to give them strength.



Soldiers after succeeding in their expedition were fond of celebrating their success with drink. Hanumān's search party of Vānaras when returning home after the successful search celebrated their success by drinking Madhu in Madhu-vana (V-61-11, etc.).

*Soldiers' Habits—Some of Them:* It was the custom of the soldiers to wave their cloths on meeting their comrades. When Hanumān returned from Laṅkā after his exploits, all the Vānaras stood up and waved like cloths, the branches of trees to welcome him (V-57-26). It was not uncommon for soldiers to carry pet animals and birds with them (II-91-64). They took great pleasure in wearing beautiful and varied robes—*vicitra-vāsasah* (VI-53-9). The soldiers liked to be adorned when going to fight (V-47-12; VI-53-6 and VI-65-24, etc.), just like the 19th century soldiers of Europe who fought in laced uniforms—gold and scarlet. They took delight not only in adorning themselves but also in decorating their horses and elephants (with gold *cāparisons* and bells).

*Soldiers and Training:* Much attention was paid to the training of soldiers. The soldiers of Daśaratha were clever, chivalrous, capable of aiming with the help of the sound alone, skilful in hunting, and capable of fighting with the hunted animals of the forest without weapons. They kept themselves always fit by hunting and fighting with wild beasts without arms. They were famous as *Atirathas*. The soldiers received training not only in the use of arms and the use of machinery<sup>1</sup> but also in *Bāhu-yuddha* (wrestling), *Gadā-yuddha* (fighting with clubs—a form of fencing) and *Malla-yuddha* (hitting with the knuckles on the head). Warriors of old must have been trained in wrestling (VI-40-14, etc.) as part of a regular course of gymnastics. Very minute details are given (in the 40th canto of *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*,) of the wrestling between *Sugrīva* and *Rāvaṇa*; many of the movements referred to in the text are said to be practised even now in India. In the battle in *Laṅkā* many

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<sup>1</sup> Machinery (*yantras*) was utilised for uprooting rocks and transporting them when Rāma built the *Setu* or the bridge over the strait (VI-22-58). Machinery was used for throwing missiles (VI-3-12), and for working drawbridges, etc. (VI-3-16).

Vānara and Rākṣasa heroes are described as wrestling and boxing on the battlefield (Bāhu-yuddha). Vajra-daṁṣṭra's soldiers wrestled and boxed with the Vānara soldiers. Makarākṣa challenged Rāma to fight with him either with arrows, or mace; or to wrestle with him.

The Gāda-yuddha described in various places in the Rāmāyaṇa must have resembled to some extent the 'fencing with bamboo rods' of the Indian Gymnasts and the fencing with quarter staffs of the English Yeomen of the middle ages. Muṣṭi-yuddha or Malla-yuddha was a special form of combat, in which the combatants struck each other on the head with the fists or knuckles (VI-54-27).

*Identification Marks:* The combatants including the Generals must have used some method of identifying friends and foes. Rāma's order during the siege of Laṅkā was, that Vānaras should not deviate from their ordinary dress (VI-37-32 f.).

*Banners:* The name by which the banners were commonly known was Dhvaja. The Generals had their own special designs marked on the banners, for identification. Daśaratha's standard had the Kovidāra tree (ebony) as an emblem (II-84-3); Asura Śambara's—the design of a fish (II-9-12); Indrajit's—the figure of a lion (VI-59-15); Rāvaṇa's—the design of a human head (VI-101-14); and Prahasta's—the design of a snake (VI-57-26).

*Officers:* The most reliable part of the army consisted of Kula-putras (men of good lineage)<sup>1</sup> (VI-3-27). As the aristocratic members of the community were men who had a stake in the country and were men of culture with good traditions, they were entrusted with responsible posts in the army<sup>2</sup>. Aṅgada taunted the Vānara heroes for behaving like common fellows and running away (VI-66-5). Rāma told Bharata to appoint loyal and well-born brave soldiers as Generals (II-100-30).

1. II-100-30 and 34, VI-66-20, VI-3-27.

2. See Ravana's army VI-3-27, etc., and Sugriva's VI-66-20 and Dasaratha's army II-100-30 and 34.



*Selection of Generals, etc:* Kings used to select intelligent, heroic, resourceful, brave and loyal men, of noble lineage and of pure conduct, as Commanders-in-Chief. The chief military officers chosen were strong, brave, and experienced soldiers who had given proofs of their courage, skill and loyalty (II—100—30 f.). Famous Generals were placed in charge of the important divisions (VI—24—13, etc.). The officers in charge of the army at the frontier (outposts) like Khara and Dūṣaṇa, were soldiers of proved ability and loyalty (VII—24—36 and 39).

*Commander-in-Chief:* The Commander-in-Chief called Senānī, or Senā-pati or Senā-nāyaka was in charge of the whole army. He had various Generals (Balādhyakṣas and Yūthapas) under his command. He received his orders from the king (IV—29—30). Both the king and the Commander-in-Chief acted with the help of advice of the War Council (which was summoned before the commencement of hostilities).

(On the banks of the Indian Ocean, Rāma and Sugrīva held a War Council to concert measures for crossing the ocean, etc. (VI—4—100). Rāvaṇa held a Council of War as soon as he learnt of Rāma's arrival with his forces on the coast of the Indian Ocean.)

*Aides-de-Camp: Kings:* (II—82—24 and VI—57—17) and Commanders-in-Chief had military officers as Aides-de-camps, in personal attendance on them. They were called Balādhyakṣa-s. They carried out the order of the chiefs. When Rāvaṇa wanted to mobilise the army in Laṅkā, Prahasta, the Commander-in-Chief ordered the Balādhyakṣas near him, to mobilise the army at once without explaining the object (VI—57—17).

*Discipline in the Army:* Military discipline was very strict. Sugrīva when issuing the summons for mobilising the troops, told the Commander-in-Chief to warn the captains that every man who failed to report himself within ten days would be killed without hesitation (IV—37—12).

Again Sugrīva during the fight in Laṅkā gave notice, that every soldier who turned his back would be killed without

mercy. During the night assault and storming of Laṅkā, he made the soldiers understand that those failing to fight according to orders would be killed (VI-75-42). (Even the Crown Prince Aṅgada realised the strictness of the king's discipline.) Rāma was also a stern disciplinarian. When marching from Kiṣkindhā to the seacoast, he gave strict orders to the Vānara soldiers, to avoid the towns and villages on the way, as he was afraid that the soldiers would molest the civil population on the way and damage their property. The Vānaras were in terror of Rāma (VI-4-39). Rāma is referred to as 'Bhīma-kopa'.

*Creating disaffection amongst the King's soldiers:* The creation of disaffection among the troops of a powerful sovereign was considered a dangerous game. Hanumān pointed out to Aṅgada the dangers of causing disaffection among Sugrīva's troops, the futility of such an attempt and the advantages of remaining loyal to the sovereign (IV-54-8, etc.). Bheda or creating of disaffection amongst the enemy's forces was one of the accepted courses of military policy.

*Deserters from the Enemy's Camp – Their Treatment:*

When Vibhīṣaṇa (insulted by Rāvaṇa) went over to the enemy's camp and sought refuge with Rāma (VI-17-1 and 16) the question of admitting deserters was fully discussed by Rāma's Generals.<sup>1</sup> The possibility of espionage on the part of the deserter was always remembered. Hence the Generals had to be very vigilant. The admission of deserters from the enemy's camp into one's army depended on various considerations, such as, their utility, their inability to hurt, pity towards them, one's power to keep them well under control, and on the moral obligation of a king to protect refugees.

*Non-combatants not to be molested:* As a rule, the civil population and the natural resources of the state were not interfered with by the fighting Generals. Such non-interference was due to a sense of justice and fair play. It was one of the accepted canons of war in those days, that non-combatants should not be attacked, in righteous warfare. The destruction of the crops by soldiers to starve the enemy was a

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<sup>1</sup> 17th Canto of Yuddha Kānda.



measure not unknown to unrighteous fighters. (Rāma's query to Bharata, whether the agricultural fields of Ayodhyā were free from the 'six troubles' (himsābhiḥ—II—100—44, presupposes this practice).

*Military Etiquette and Ethics:* The military etiquette and ethics of the Rāmāyaṇa age demand special attention. There were many conventions which had to be followed by kings and warriors. The standard of military ethics was of a high order. It was considered disgraceful and humiliating for soldiers to retreat (VI—82—4) while it was deemed highly meritorious to die on the field of battle in the service of the king (VII—23C—13f.).

It was considered sinful to kill women <sup>1</sup>, non-combatants (hiding themselves out of fear), people who sought peace, and refugees. A challenge to fight had always to be accepted.

It was the custom when entering the enemy's forts, to avoid placing right foot first in the enemy's territory. Hanumān when entering Laṅkā avoided the gate, jumped over the rampart, and put his left foot first (V—4—3).

Kings could not fight without a legitimate cause. Notice had to be given to the enemy that war would be declared unless the specified demands be accepted.

Rāvaṇa complained to Mārīca that his forces posted at Janasthāna had been killed by Rāma without notice (III—36—7) and that his innocent sister had been disfigured by Rāma without any provocation (III—36—12).

Vālī pointed out to Rāma that it was disgraceful to attack a man without cause (IV—17—25, etc.).

It was considered unjust to kill many innocent people for the faults of one. It was disgraceful to strike a foe on the back when retreating. Killing a man while fighting with somebody else was considered highly despicable (IV—17—18). (Hanumān considered it unfair to attack Rāvaṇa while the latter was engaged with Nīla.) (VI—59—71.)

It was not considered fair to kill a foe when drunk, or sleeping, or unarmed, or tired, or intoxicated, or surrounded by women; *i.e.*, one should not take advantage of the foe's

1. 1—26—13 and VI—81—23.

weak moments (IV-11-36 and VII-32-28). When Rāvaṇa was tired, Rāma told him to go home, rest himself and then return to the fight with a fresh chariot and a fresh bow (VI-59-138 f.). However, taking advantage of a foe's weakness was not unknown altogether. Lakṣmaṇa took advantage of a weak moment of Indrajit. Śatrughna was specially asked by Rāma to take Lavaṇa by surprise and kill him when he was not in possession of his famous Sūla (VII-63-27 ff.). Striking or slaying a foe, who had desisted from the fight, was against the rules of Kṣātra-dharma or chivalry (VII-8-3 and VI-25-20). The killing of an ambassador was highly blameworthy and against the rules of polity and morality (V-52-5, etc. and 13).

It was obligatory on the part of the victorious kings to arrange for a stable government in the conquered country before leaving it (VII-62-17). The next available heir was usually chosen as king. Rāma crowned Vibhīṣaṇa as king of Laṅkā after killing Rāvaṇa.

*Deceits in War:* Though Kūṭa-yuddha was condemned, yet deceits were sometimes justified in war. Hanumān thought it advisable to disguise himself in order to prevent the Rākṣasas from recognising him (V-2-33, 46, etc.) as a foe.

Rāvaṇa told Vidyujihva to make a dummy head of Rāma and exhibit it to Sītā as the head of decapitated Rāma, in order to frighten her and make her capitulate (VI-31-6 ff.).

Indrajit went to the battlefield with a dummy image of Sītā and beheaded it in the presence of the Vānara hosts, to cause consternation among them (VI-81-31). Again, both Rāvaṇa, and Indrajit are described as having fought behind clouds (smoke screens in modern phraseology) rendering themselves invisible (VI-73-28). Everything was considered fair in war and love by Rāvaṇa.

*Armour:* The following is a list of protective appliances used by soldiers during the Rāmāyaṇa period.

1. Ārṣabha-carma (bucklers of bull hide used by swordsmen V-1-24).

2. Godhā (a leathern fence fastened round the left arm to prevent injury from the bow string-I-22-9).



3. Aṅguli-trāṇa (a finger protector, a contrivance like a thimble used by archers to protect the thumb or finger from being injured by the bow string—I-22-9).
4. Kavaca (coat of mail—VII-21-37).
5. Abhedya-kavaca (impenetrable coat of mail—II-31-30).
6. Tanu-trāṇa (cuirass or armour for the body—VI-75-10).
7. Varma (coat of mail—VI-75-10).
8. Śiras-trāṇa (Helmet—VI-98-32).
9. Marma-trāṇa (armour protecting the vital parts, same as Tanu-trāṇa—II-91-76).

Not only were the soldiers protected but also the horses and elephants (VI-75-10). The chest of horses was protected by uraśchada or breast-plates (III-64-43).

In addition to the armour (VI-75-10) the horses had gold ornaments Kanaka-bhūṣaṇam (VI-69-29), Kāñcana-saṃnāhān (III-25-21), Vāji-bhāṇḍa-paricchada (VI-75-9).

**Weapons:** The kṣattriya heroes in those days fought with bows, arrows, astras<sup>1</sup>, maces, lances and swords. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa carried with them bows, arrows, quivers, swords, bucklers, impenetrable kavaca or armour (II-31-29, etc.), and Godhā and Aṅguli-trāṇa (II-99-23).

The Vānaras fought with trees and boulders.

Sugrīva and other Vānara heroes, though as a rule fighting with trees, rocks and their fists, must also have been familiar with the use of weapons, as they are described as fighting with swords and maces, belonging to dead foes. But

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<sup>1</sup> Astras were special kinds of powerful missiles used by car or chariot-warriors. These Astras were supposed to be taught by Mantras. These mantras were only secret formulae for the production of special projectiles.

as a rule they found it unnecessary to use weapons. They were satisfied with their brute strength. Sugrīva killed Mahodara with a sword (VI-98-32). Aṅgada fought Mahāpārśva with a Parigha (VI-99-12).

The Rākṣasas were trained in the use of every kind of weapon. They also fought with rocks and trees (III-25-30, etc.).

*Weapons in Common Use:* The weapons in use amongst the soldiers were:

- Prāsa (dart or a barbed missile-II-16-2).
- Kārmuka or Dhanus (Bow-II-16-2).
- Kalāpa or Tūṇī (quiver-II-52-11 and II-31-30).
- Gadā (Mace) sometimes fitted with gold band and studded with sharp iron nails (III-22-21).
- Trīśūla (Trident-V-41-12).
- Paṭṭīśa (a kind of spear-V-41-12).
- Khadga (Sword-VI-9-4).
- Paraśvada (Battle-axe-III-22-20).
- Mudgara (a long handled hammer-III-22-20).
- Kūṭa (concealed dagger-V-4-17).
- Pāśa (Lasso-I-27-8).
- Śakti (Dart-III-22-21).
- Ṛṣṭi (a double-edged sword-VI-7-3).
- Cakra (discus-III-22-20).
- Tomara (Javelin or Iron Club-III-22-20).
- Asi (sword) sometimes with gold hilt as in the case of Rāma (III-22-21).
- Musala (Thick club-III-22-21).
- Vajra (a kind of hard mace-III-22-21).
- Śataghñī (a huge stone studded with iron spikes shot by catapults or cannons-I-5-11).
- Aśani (V-4-21) Mace.
- Kṣepaṇī (probably Boomerang-V-4-22).

Of all the weapons, the long bows and arrows were the most important. The arrows shot from the bow were of two kinds: the bāna or sara or the ordinary arrows, and the astra or special kind of missile. It was the possession of these special arrows or missiles that made the great heroes like Rāma, Lakṣmana, Viśvāmītra and Rāvana terrible in battle.



Rāma's arrows were marked. It was probably the custom of heroes in olden times to mark the arrows (VI-64-25) with their names.

The Astras or special arrows were of various kinds. The special Astras taught by Viśvāmitra to Rāma are listed in the 27th and 28th cantos of Bāla-kāṇḍa (See also VI-91-54, etc., VI-48-16 and VI-100-33, etc.). Some of the Astras caused terrific destruction (VI-100-39, etc.).

The ordinary arrows—bāṇa or śara or nārāca—were of different kinds and forms and made of various kinds of materials. Poisoned arrows were also in use (II-10-1 and 25). The arrows were feathered with falcon's plumes or gold plumes (VI-100-28 and VI-45-23).

The different kinds of śaras were:—

Adhogati—slanting down	VI	45	23
Agni-dīpta-mukha—fire-faced	VI	100	45
Añjalika—wedge-shaped—resembling the folded palm	VI	45	23
Ardha-candra—crescent-shaped	VI	69	63
	VI	100	45
Ardha-nārāca—semi-circular	VI	45	23
Bhalla—end shaped like a double-edged sword	VI	45	23
	VI	69	63
Candra-vaktra—moon-faced	VI	100	45
Āśṭviṣānana—Cobra-faced	VI	100	42
Āsuga—fast ones	VI	45	23
Dhūmaketu-mukha—Comet-faced	VI	100	45
Graha-vaktra—Planet-faced	VI	100	46
Gṛdhra-mukha—Vulture-faced	VI	100	40
Īhāmrga-mukha—Wolf-faced	VI	100	41
Kāka-mukha—Crow-faced	VI	100	40
Kaṅka-mukha—Heron-faced	VI	100	40
Kaṅka-patrin	VI	45	12
Karṇin—Ear-shaped	VI	76	6
Khara-mukha—Ass-faced	VI	100	42
Kṣura—Razor-shaped	VI	45	23
	VI	76	6
Kṣurapra—Razor-shaped	VI	69	63
	VI	76	6

Kukkuṭa-vaktra—Cock-faced	VI	100	42
Leliḥāna—Serpent-like	VI	100	41
Makarānana—Shark or alligator-faced	VI	100	42
Mārgaṇa-arrow	VI	45	22
Nāgamaya—Serpent-like	VI	44	37
Nakṣatra-vaktra—Star-faced	VI	100	46
Nārāca (iron)	VI	45	23
	VI	76	6
Nata-parva—flat-jointed	VI	71	72
Pañcāsyā—five-mouthed	VI	100	41
Prasannāgra—point burnished and sharp	VI	45	23
Rukma-puṅkha—winged with gold feathers	VI	45	23
Śalya—short ones—dart-like	VI	76	6
Śilī-mukha—feather-shaped	VI	76	6
Śimha-mukha—lion-faced	VI	100	40
Śṛgāla-vadana—jackal-faced	VI	100	40
Sūrya-mukha—sun-faced	VI	100	45
Śvāna-vaktra—dog-faced	VI	100	42
Śyena-mukha—hawk-faced	VI	100	40
Ulkā-mukha—meteor like or torch-like	VI	100	46
Varāha-mukha—boar-faced	VI	100	42
Vatsa-danta—teeth-shaped	VI	76	6
	VI	45	23
Vidyujjihvopama—lightning-like	VI	100	46
Vipāṭa—tearing (shells)	VI	76	6
Vyādītāsyā—shaped like a gaping mouth	VI	100	41
Vyāghra-mukha—tiger-faced	VI	100	40

*Soldiers' Pride in Keeping Their Weapons Bright and Sharp:* Weapons of war were kept burnished and free from rust by the soldiers (VII—27—39). The sword with which Aṅgada killed Vajradamṣṭra is described as a bright rustless sword (VI—54—34).

*Soldiers' Worship of Weapons:* The worship of weapons was quite a common practice. The famous bow of Śiva was daily worshipped by Janaka in his palace with sandal, scents, etc. (I—31—13). Rāma's weapons were kept in the house of his priest (Purohita) so that Pūjā (worship) might be offered to it every day (II—31—29, etc.). Sītā used to worship daily Rāma's bow (VI—32—17). Rāvaṇa's sword Candrahāsa was



given to him by Saṃkara on condition that it should be worshipped daily (VII-16-46).

*Machinery in Warfare:* Machinery<sup>53</sup> must have played an important part in warfare during the Rāmāyaṇa period. Sugrīva's soldiers made use of Yantras (evidently Cranes and Engines) to carry rocks to the sea to build the bridge (VI-22-58). Ayodhyā was full of Yantrāyudhas and Śataghnīs (cannons) (I-5-10 and 11) intended for mechanical warfare. The army in Ayodhyā included Yantra-kovidāḥ and Yantrakas (Mechanical Engineers II-80-1 and 2). They were sent in advance by Bharata to prepare the routes for marching.

Kiṣkindhā, the hill fort, is described as containing Yantras (IV-14-5).

Laṅkā had various huge engines or machines mounted on the gate towers of the fort, to shoot arrows and rocks at the enemy (VI-3-12). Śataghnīs (cannons) are also mentioned as being mounted on Laṅkā's gate towers (VI-3-13). The drawbridges at the gates of Laṅkā are described as being fitted up with many Yantras (engines) (VI-3-16 f.). There are many references to the use of Vimāna (aeroplane of some sort) and Puṣpaka (Airship), and to air fights in the Rāmāyaṇa. The science and art of aerial navigation has been lost since a long time in India.

The following passage from Durant's *Meaning of Life* is to the point: "All things, said Aristotle, have been discovered and forgotten many times over. A thousand civilizations have disappeared under the ocean or the earth."<sup>1</sup>

*Diplomacy:* Kings had to be fully conversant with the four courses of policy mentioned in the science of politics, namely, Sāma, Dāna, Bheda and Daṇḍa (conciliatory measures, bribery, causing disaffection amongst the enemy's forces, and fighting) (VI-13-7). The particular method to

<sup>1</sup>I have tried to use English words corresponding as exactly as possible to the Sanskrit terms. The meaning of the terms has been inferred from the context and Govindarāja's Commentary.

<sup>2</sup>Durant on the *Meaning of Life*, p. 15.

be adopted varied with the circumstances (VI—9—8, etc. and III—72—7). Fighting (daṇḍa) was thought of only after the three other means, (conciliation or peace, bribery or gifts, and the sowing of dissensions, amongst the enemy's forces and allies) had been tried without success. Bheda or causing disaffection in the troops of the enemy was a favourite form of tactics. Rāvaṇa sent the spy Śuka to Sugrīva to alienate him from Rāma (VI—20—8 and 9).

*Qualifications of Ambassador or Envoy or Dūta:* The qualifications of an ambassador, envoy or dūta, are laid down in II—100—35. Kings selected as Dūtas, clever men who were tactful, resourceful and loyal. The envoys had to be chosen from among the native subjects of the king and they were expected to carry out the king's orders to the very letter (II—100—35, V—41—5 f. and VI—1—8 ff. and VI—20—17). The Dūta was an open messenger whereas a spy (Cāra) was a secret agent. These Dūtas played a prominent part in inter-state relations. Peaceful measures were tried at first through ambassadors to avoid as much as possible unnecessary fighting. The two typical embassies described in the Rāmāyaṇa are those of Hanumān and Aṅgada (V—51—1, etc. and VI—41—60, etc.).

*Espionage: Duties on Spies:* There was an organised system of espionage. The spies who were secret agents, were instrumental in spreading disaffection in the army of the foe. Their help during the siege of a fort was indispensable. They were trained to do any mean act for the sake of their master. The spies were called Cāras, Cāraṇas or Cārikas. Kings and Commanders very largely depended on the spies for information about the strength and weakness of the enemy's forces, and their plans of action. Spies had to be faithful, calm and courageous (VI—29—18). The spy had to find out how the enemy king was protected and guarded, and whether the people in his city were loyal or disloyal to the king. He had also to note the accessibility or inaccessibility of the enemy's fort and the numerical strength and the distribution of the enemy's forces. He had to go about unobserved by the enemies and find out their weak points.

Hanumān was sent as a spy by Sugriva to find out the intentions of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa when they entered



Kiṣkindhā. Vibhīṣaṇa's ministers were utilised as spies by Rāma to gather information about Rāvaṇa's defences. Rāvaṇa used his ministers Suka, Sāraṇa and Sārdūla as spies to find out the strength, resources, etc., of Rama's army (VI-25-1, etc.).

*Treatment of Envoys and Spies:* Envoys when captured could not be killed but they could be punished by disfigurement, whipping, branding or shaving of the head (V-52-13, etc., VI-20-16 and 18). Spies when caught could be killed, imprisoned or tortured (VI-17-29, V-52-1 f., VI-25-27 and VI-20-28, etc.).

(As the spies could be punished and not the envoys, the spies sometimes used to pretend that they were Dūtas. Hanumān said he was Rāmadūta and behaved like one boldly. Śuka and Sāraṇa, Rāvaṇa's spies, also pretended to be envoys from Rāvaṇa and carried Rāma's return message to Rāvaṇa (VI-25-27, etc.).

## MOVEMENTS OF ARMIES

*The Proper Season:* During the rainy season, all military operations were suspended (IV-28-15 and IV-26-13 f.). Kings never set out on military expeditions during the rainy season on account of the difficulty in moving troops along the slushy roads and the difficulty of fording the rivers in flood. The rainy season was utilised only for surprise attacks, as in the case of Śatrughna's campaign against Lavaṇāsura (VII-64-10). The summer season was utilised for transport of troops across rivers (VII-64-11). The military operations were always undertaken early in autumn, soon after the cessation of rain (IV-26-16, IV-30-38 and 62 f.).

Rāma was waiting in Kiṣkindhā during the rainy season on the Prasravaṇa hill. He hurried up Sugriva as soon as autumn set in (IV-30-77, etc.).

## MOBILISATION OF THE ARMY

*Peace Mobilisation:* Peace mobilisation is well illustrated in the case of Bharata's march to Citrakūṭa. After deciding to go to Citrakūṭa, with the army, Bharata ordered his minister Sumantra to speedily assemble the army and give orders for

the march (yātrā) (II—82—22). The minister arranged everything as ordered, through the responsible officers (II—82—24 and 26). As soon as the order was given for mobilisation (II—82—22) the forces were marshalled (II—82—27). The object of the march was explained to the military officers (II—82—30) and communicated to the chief citizens (II—82—31).

*War Mobilisation of Vanaras:* We get a good idea of War mobilisation from the steps taken by Sugrīva to collect his forces. When Sugrīva told the Commander-in-Chief Nīlā to assemble all the Yūthapālas (Captains) and the whole Vānara army, messengers were sent by Nīlā all over the kingdom to inform the soldiers and captains that they should assemble for the review at the headquarters on a particular date. Later a second batch of couriers was despatched to hurry up the first lot and induce the soldiers by persuasion and gifts to assemble quickly. Sugrīva told the second lot of messengers to bring up for punishment before him, those captains who happened to be dilatory (IV—37—8, etc.). The Commander-in-Chief was ordered to arrange for the muster of the soldiers and find out the absentees. After arrival at the place of muster the troops were arranged in different divisions under the respective commanders. It was the duty of the different commanders to note the absentees (IV—39—44).

*War Mobilisation of Rākṣasas:* When Laṅkā was besieged by Rāma, Rāvaṇa's forces were all living in the garrison town of Laṅkā. They were therefore mobilised by the beating of the military drums (bheri) (VI—33—20, etc and III—24—9). Rāvaṇa told the Aides-de-camp near him to assemble the army quickly, without telling them the reason for mobilisation (VI—32—45). The general body of the army was kept ignorant of the purpose for which they were mobilised, as secrecy was necessary under the circumstances.

## EXPEDITIONS

*Preparation of Routes:* Many interesting points will be brought out by a description of Bharata's march to Citrakūṭa. Before his march Bharata ordered that the roads along the intended route to the Daṇḍaka forest should be levelled and put in order by the Sappers and Miners and that guides should be provided (II—79—13 and II—82—20). The Pioneer



regiments prepared the route. They cut the overhanging boughs, creepers and bushes, felled the stumps of wood, removed stones, felled down obstructing trees, planted trees in bare spots, burnt up the stubble on the way, levelled every dale and steep, filled the pits on the way with earth, threw bridges across the ravines, pounded fine the flinty soil, diverted the water of the pools on the way by cutting channels of exit, provided various and separate tanks for use of men, horses, elephants, etc., in the army, and sank wells and tanks in dry spots, where there was no water.

The route was thus cleared in advance and got ready for the advance of the army. The marching route was provided with pavements of brick and clay at various intervals and were planted with trees bearing blossoms and buds. The roads were prepared right up to the river Gaṅgā. Camping places were arranged on the way at various intervals for the king to halt (II-80-17). The royal tent was pitched on a plastered pavement. It was surrounded by flowering plants and adorned with flags and buntings. The royal tent was provided with ample space all round. Many tents were spread over the whole camping ground, which was intersected by roads, and occupied by bazaars.

*Camping of the Army:* Camping grounds were pre-arranged when the army was marching over known regions as in the case of Bharat's army (II-80th Canto). The camps were usually burnt before vacating. The Generals used to set fire and destroy the old camps to prevent their utilisation by the enemies (II-89-14).

*Transport<sup>1</sup> over Water-Rivers on the way:* Bharata's huge army consisting of innumerable men, animals, waggons, etc., was transported across the Gaṅgā, by means of the 500 boats supplied by Guha, king of the Niṣādas, living on the bank of the Ganges (II-89-10, etc.). The boats were evidently ships. The following description gives a very good idea of the method of transport of armies across rivers. The princes and

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1. Rama's army of Vanaras was transported over the Strait (Palks) by means of a bridge constructed by Nala and the Vanaras—Adam's Bridge of Nala-setu. This remarkable engineering feat is well described in detail in VI-22-52, etc.

the queens got into the royal boats, after the chief priest, the preceptors and the Brāhmaṇas had embarked. Subsequently the other women of the harem, got into other boats. Many boats were loaded with waggons and provisions. Then embarked the troops after setting fire to the camp and after having loaded their goods in various boats. Some boats were filled with women, some with horses and others with carriages and cattle. Elephants with mahouts on their backs swam across the river. Some soldiers crossed the river in boats. Some soldiers crossed on rafts, some crossed with the help of inverted pots, and some swam across.<sup>1</sup>

*Military Expeditions:* Military expeditions are also described in the Rāmāyaṇa.

*Śatrughna's Expedition:* Śatrughna's expedition against Lavaṇa's Madhupurī is rather briefly described but much interesting information is available. The four-fold army, the commissariat<sup>2</sup> department, bazaars and the camp followers went in advance, during the summer, crossed the Ganges, and were waiting for Śatrughna, the General (VII-64-2, etc.). Śatrughna, contrary to custom, marched during the rainy season (VII-64-10) as he intended a surprise attack. He entered Lavaṇa's city during his absence and stood ready to do battle at the main gate. When Lavaṇa was about to enter the gate, on his return from hunting, Śatrughna challenged him to single combat. As Lavaṇa was a powerful hero, Rāma had instructed Śatrughna to catch Lavaṇa by surprise and fight with him when he was unprepared. After killing Lavaṇa in the combat, Śatrughna sent for his own forces which had been waiting for his orders, entered the city with his army, and established his own kingdom (VII-68-3, etc.).

1. This passage in the Ramayana gives us some idea of the water transport. The boast referred to must have been fairly big ships as they transported a large army with all the outfit.

2. The Commissariat department carried also much money in addition to the other stores, probably for necessary purchases and possibly also for corrupting enemy's allies and soldiers (VII-64-4).



## MILITARY EXPEDITION OF RĀMA AGAINST LAṆKĀ

The description of Rāma's expedition against Laṅkā would also give a good idea of the details of a military expedition.

The invading Commander had to acquire beforehand information about the inaccessible fortresses in the enemy's territory, the strength of the army, the various means of defence of the enemy and the accessibility of the entrances or gates. Rāma had obtained information on all these points before planning his invasion of Laṅkā (VI-3-3, etc.).

Before starting, the weaker part of the forces was ordered by Rāma to stay at home evidently for home defence.

*Marching orders and disposition of the troops:* Rāma ordered the Commander-in-Chief Nīla (VI-4-10, etc.), to march in the van, with picked soldiers and to scan and clear the path for the host (as the route was through woods and hills). Nīla was asked to avoid the proximity of towns and villages and to lead the host through paths well supplied with fruits, roots, honey and cool drinking water (the usual food of Rāma and Vānaras). He was also warned against the possible dangers on the way, viz., ambuscade, and poisoning of food and water supplies by the enemy on the way. Further he was ordered to search the woods and glades for hiding enemy soldiers. The boldest of the Generals Gaja, Gavaya and Gavākṣa led the right wing while Gandha-mādana an equally powerful General led the left wing. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva led the centre, rousing the enthusiasm of the whole army. Care was taken not to expose the head of the army and the king to unnecessary risks, as the success of the whole campaign depended on their safety (IV-65-21 f.). The rear was in charge of the wisest General, Jāmbavān. Suśeṇa was the Surgeon-in-Chief. Some of the officers were told off to keep the forces on the alert and to spur them on during the march. It may be pointed out here that the front of the army was called Agra or Mūrdhan, the wing of the army Pārśva, the main body or centre of the army Kuṣi or Uras (VI-24-14), and the rear of the army Jaghana. As already stated, the vanguard or the advancing front, had to survey and arrange a route with an ample supply of food and water. In passing

through unknown countries, the army had to march in battle formation, to guard against possible surprises or ambushes, and speedily reach known regions.

After a quick mobilisation of the army, Rāma made a forced march, day and night to the south coast through the woods, ascended Mahendra hill, descended on its southern slope and speedily reached the woods on the coast of the Indian ocean for encampment (VI-4-100 ff.). As there were no halts on the way, no arrangements for camping were made along the route.

*Encampment:* Rāma gave strict orders to the leaders in the camp, that every General should remain in charge of his squadron and not leave his post under any circumstances (as foes might possibly be waiting in ambush).

The army was encamped by Sugrīva in three divisions. The Commander-in-Chief arranged the patrol forces in the camp in accordance with the accepted tactics of the day, and told off Maında and Dvīda for the duty of touring round the camp constantly and keeping the soldiers on the alert\* (VI-5-1 f.). As Rāma was in an unknown country, he kept the army close together and nobody was allowed to go out of the camp (which was constantly patrolled).

*Transport over the sea:* As Rāma had to carry his forces across the Straits to Laṅkā, he had a bridge constructed. As soon as the bridge was finished he transported the army quickly across the sea, and marshalled his troops in battle array on Lanka's coast, in a well wooded spot, furnished with roots and fruits (VI-22-84).

*Ticket of leave for soldiers:* Many of the Vānara soldiers in Rāma's camp got the permission of the Commander-in-Chief to prowl at night in Laṅkā (VI-39-14).

Rāma's vigilance and his knowledge of the military science are noteworthy (VI-24-13, etc.). He held a War Council before deciding on the plan of attack. In accordance with the decision of the Council, he ascended the Suvēla hill with his troops. Subsequently he and his chief Generals ascended the highest peak and reconnoitred the country all round (VI-40-2, etc.). Having quickly made up his mind as to



the future movements, he led his forces in battle array to Laṅkā fortress and surrounded it.

Rāma was very particular about the protection of bridges. When the Vānara forces were crossing the bridge, Vibhīṣaṇa and his four Generals stood guard at the Laṅkā end, to see that the forces were not attacked while crossing the bridge (VI-22-78). Rāma's anxiety about the safety of the bridges continued right through the battle. When on one occasion Kumbhakarna caused terrible havoc amongst the Vānara troops, Rāma ordered Sugrīva to take particular care about the roads and the bridges behind (VI-61-34).

*The Battle:* The warfare might be divided into (1) Battles in open ground and (2) Siege warfare.

*Battles in open ground:* The fight between Rāma and the forces of Khara and Dūṣaṇa well illustrates battles in the open ground (III-24-17 ff.). On getting sight of Khara's advancing forces, Rāma put on his armour, and shot at them from a distance. Rāma's arrows and astras destroyed the enemy soldiers even before they reached him. At night, fighting was stopped, save in exceptional circumstances as in the siege warfare in Laṅkā. Khara wanted to finish the battle before sunset (III-29-23) as it would have been difficult to move his forces and shoot in the dark. Rāma fought to a finish and destroyed the whole army of Khara (except for a few fugitives who escaped to tell the tale to Rāvaṇa III-31-1).

*Siege Warfare:* The description of Rāma's assault on Laṅkā gives us a good picture of siege warfare. After surrounding the fortress, Rāma sent his envoy to Rāvaṇa with his terms in accordance with the Rules of War (Rāja-dharma) (VI-41-59). His terms were unconditional surrender and restoration of Sītā, or battle. As Rāvaṇa was in no mood to come to terms, the Vānaras filled up the moats with rocks, mud, trees, etc., broke the ramparts, jumped over the ramparts, shouted their war cries, and besieged the inner fort. The forces were divided into four main divisions and put under the ablest Generals in front of each gate. Rāma placed himself at the North Gate which was protected by Rāvaṇa. Part of the forces was kept in reserve behind.

Vyūhas or special battle formations are referred to in the Yuddhakāṇḍa (VI-24-19, VI-30-11 and VI-61-34). Rāma was fond of Garuḍa-vyūha. His Generals fought a series of battles at each gate with the issuing forces of the beleaguered garrison of Rāvaṇa. When most of the enemy's Generals and forces had been destroyed, Sugrīva set fire to Laṅkā after sunset with Rāma's approval (VI-75-4, etc.). While the conflagration was spreading and the men and women were running out of the houses, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa showered their arrows on the fugitives (VI-75-33, etc.). Sugrīva's strict order to the Vānaras was that each man was to fight at the gate nearest to him with the fugitives (any soldier disobeying the order being liable to be killed straight off). Setting fire to the fort was a ruse to force the beleaguered garrison to come out and fight in the open, and it had the desired effect. It compelled Rāvaṇa's forces to come out and fight. The slaughter of Rāvaṇa by Rāma and the coronation of Vibhīṣaṇa as King of Lankā were the final episodes.

*Methods of fighting of individual combatants or Dvandva-Yuddha:* In addition to mass fighting in which a warrior hit all and sundry, Dvandva-yuddhas (duels) were also in vogue. In the midst of the battle sometimes, duels were fought. Warriors like Rāvaṇa and others, at times, challenged their foes to single combat (IV-11-22; and VII-32-25, etc.), and allowed their opponents to choose any particular method of fighting (VI-71-60 and VI-79-16). The warriors were evidently trained in all methods of fighting—fighting with bows and arrows—or with astras, swords, club or mace; and in boxing and wrestling (VI-40-13, VI-43-6 ff. VI-53-22, VI-79-16 and VI-76-7 f.). The appointment of umpires, Prāśnikas was not unknown (III-27-4).

*Air Fight:* Special mention must be made of the reference to Air battle or Ākāśa-yuddha between Rāvaṇa and the sons of Vāruṇa (VII-23-34 ff.). Akṣa Kumāra, and Indrajit are said to have fought in chariots stationed high up in the air (V-47-5 and 33, VI-73-28).

*Night Fight:* Night Fights were not unknown. Indrajit and the Rākṣasas continued their fight with Rāma and the Vānaras even during the night (VI-44-2, etc.).



Fighting continuously day and night without interruption was also known (VII-22-15).

*Fighting Fair and Foul:* Righteous or clean fighting was Ārjava-yuddha (VII-15-9 and VI-50-51). Rāma and his friends were clean fighters as a rule (VI-50-51). The Rākṣasas were well known as deceitful fighters or Kūṭa-yodhinaḥ (VI-44-38, VI-50-51 and I-20-7).

*First Aid on the Battlefield:* One can safely infer from one passage that some sort of first aid was attempted on the battlefield. When the Vānara army was sorely hit by the Brāhmāstra of Indrajit, in the night-battle, Hanumān and Vibhīṣaṇa went round the battlefield, with torches, to find out the wounded soldiers and administer first aid (VI-74-6 ff.). Sugrīva directed the Surgeon Suṣeṇa to take wounded Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to Kiṣkindhā (VI-50-22 f.).

*Treatment of the Wounded:* Great care was taken of the wounded soldiers (in Rāma's army). Suṣeṇa treated the wounded, by the inhalation of medicinal juices. In the case of the merciless Rākṣasas, no attempt was made to provide treatment to the wounded soldiers. Suṣeṇa and many of his Vānaras could identify medicinal herbs and their habitat. (VI-50-28 ff. and VI-102-28, 41 etc.).

*Disposal of the dead in war:* In the case of Rāma's army the dead bodies were left lying on the battlefield, while in the case of the Rākṣasa soldiers, the dead bodies were quickly thrown into the sea. Rāvaṇa's order as regards the disposal of the dead Rākṣasas, was to throw them all into the sea, so that the survivors might not be frightened by the knowledge of the immense slaughter (VI-74-75 f.).

*Ransom of Prisoners:* Ransoming of the prisoners was not unknown. When Indra<sup>1</sup> was captured by Indrajit, Brahmā negotiated with Indrajit for his release and gave him the ransom he wished for (VII-30-11, etc.).

Military organisation in ancient India had reached a very high degree of efficiency. Most of the weapons used in fighting,

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1. Though this might appear to be legendary ransoming might be understood to have been common.

the different methods of warfare like siege warfare and the various modes of transport show a highly advanced state of society in the Rāmāyaṇa period.

## THE NAVY

As the Rāmāyaṇa deals with the adventures of Rāma, and as all the Āryan kings of the day were ruling in the landlocked northern India, between the Himālayas and the Vindhyās, there is no reference to the maintenance of a Navy by the Ikṣvāku princes. But many references to cargo boats are met with.

King Guha is the only king mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa as possessing ships of some sort.

As king Guha lived on the banks of the navigable river (Ganges) he possessed 500 boats in addition to the river guards (or coast guards in modern phraseology) and an army of soldiers. For fighting purposes he placed 100 armed Kaivartakas in each boat or ship (II-84-8). The boats were also used for transport. When Guha transported Bharata's army, 500 boats were utilised (II-89-10). As Bharata's army was large and contained many waggons, palanquins, chariots, the fourfold army, and a host of camp followers, these 500 boats must have been very big—probably they were ships (II-89-10 ff. and 16).

The royal boats bearing banners and large bells on their prows, well decked, furnished with oars and manned by powerful bargemen, were called Svastika boats. They were larger than the ordinary boats, and probably constructed in the shape of a Svastika. The Svastika boats were large boats with wooden walls, roofs, and windows. An awning of white woollen carpet was also used (II-89-11).

Vālmīki was certainly aware of the existence of large trading ships with sails. The ships were sailing vessels and were often heavily loaded with merchandise (V-1-66, V-1-186 and V-57-4). They used to sail in the mid-ocean.

The big boats or ships were called Mahā-nau and the navigation routes nau-patha.

Hanumān when describing Laṅkā to Rāma informed him that there were no navigation routes round it, and that it



was inaccessible (VI-3-21). Sītā in her excessive distress at Laṅkā is compared to a ship sinking in water on account of being heavily loaded and on account of the gales (V-17-3). We may safely infer from this metaphor that cargo boats used to sail in the ocean.

Sītā herself refers to the loaded ships in mid-ocean tossed by the winds (V-25-14 and V-28-8). The landing places were called Tīrthas (II-52-6, II-55-5 and II-56-39). The boatmen or rowers were called Nāvikas.

Water transport was by means of pots, rafts, catamarans, coracles and boats.

The nautical terms met with in the Rāmāyaṇa are:

Dāśa-boatmen (II-89-20).

Kaṇṇa-rudder (II-52-80).

Kaṇṇagrāha—Karnadhāra—Pilot (II-52-6 and II-52-80).

Mahā-nau—ship (V-57-4).

Nau—boats (II-52-6 and I-24-2).

Nāvika—Boatmen (II-52-79).

Plava-catamaran made by tying together tree trunks (II-55-6 and 14, II-89-19 and IV-40-27).

Pota—a raft (V-10-37).

Sphya—oar (II-52-80).

Svastika—a royal boat (II-89-12).

Tīrtha—wharf (II-52-6).

Vāhana—rudder (II-52-6).

## ROCKETS ARE ANCIENT HISTORY

There is nothing new about the use of rockets in warfare, Herbert S. Zim says in his newly published study of this subject entitled "Rockets and Jets." The rocket idea, he points out, is at least 2,000 years old and was known to the Greeks, Egyptians and the Chinese long before the Germans adapted it to use in this war.

He traces the first hint of the power of reaction theory to the legends of the flying pigeon of Archytas, a wooden bird built in 360 B.C. This was followed by the aeolipile a jet or reaction engine built by Hero of Alexandria in the second century B.C. A boiler resembling a covered pot was filled with water and placed on a tripod over a fire.

"One can see in Hero's invention the key idea that developed into the steam engine, the steam and gas turbine, the jet-propelled plane, and the rocket," writes Zim. "While the Greek idea languished, rockets were being developed on the other side of the earth. An ancient Chinese manuscript, well illustrated, tells the story of the battle of Peinking, when the Chinese fought their Tartar enemies in 1232 A.D. The account tells how the defenders of the city used 'arrows of flying fire' that terrified the enemy. These were actually rockets and not ordinary arrows dipped in burning pitch. The record of this battle speaks of bombs as well as rockets, which indicates that the Chinese were already skilled in making gunpowder and used it in several ways. If the Chinese did get the idea from the Greeks, they had several centuries to improve it. If the discovery was completely independent, as it may well have been then they may have worked at it for an even longer time.

"Just when the first European rockets were used is difficult to say. It is possible that the idea did not come directly from China but from China by way of Arabia. Evidence for this comes from an Arabian manuscript, dated 1280, on war engines. Here rockets are mentioned and are referred to as 'Chinese arrows'."

An early historian notes the use of rockets in a battle in 1379, writes Zim. By the beginning of the 15th century they



were widely known. In 1405, a treatise by a German military engineer mentioned three types and advocated their use in warfare. Another military expert, Joanes de Fontana, an Italian, showed imagination in rocket design. In his book of war instruments are drawings of rockets disguised as rabbits, pigeons and fish, equipped with rollers to carry them toward the enemy lines. De Fontana even sketched a rocket car.

In 1629 Giovanni Branca, an Italian engineer, perfected a steam turbine that directly applied the jet principle and was the forerunner of modern steam turbines. Jet-propelled steam wagons were attributed by some to Charles Newton and by others to a Dutch professor, Wilhem Jakob Gravesande. Claude Ruggiere experimented with rockets in Paris during the early 1800's. But practical success had to await a real understanding of the basic principles of physics and chemistry involved in rocket construction and jet action, Zim points out.

By the end of the 18th century Hyder Ali, Prince of Mysore in India, had a rocket corps in his army. The rocket artillery numbered 1,200 men, using rockets weighing from 6 to 12 pounds. Their range was up to a mile and a half. They were used against the British between 1780 and 1799

During the Napoleonic War, rockets landed in Boulogne and Copenhagen. The British used them against the French Fleet in 1809. In the United States they were used in the war of 1812. The over-grown skyrockets perfected during this period by William Congreve were copied all over Europe. In 1846, William Hale, an American, contributed further enlightenment. His rockets were adopted by the U.S. Army. The use of rockets in battle reached its prime in the early years of the 19th century. Then they became practically obsolete as military weapons until recent months, but at various times they were used by the Dutch in the Celebes, by the Russians in Siberia, and by other European powers. They were even used in a minor way in the last war.

Zim pays tribute to the bazooka, America's own form of rocket. He gives the latest facts about rockets and jet-propelled planes. He has chapters on the V-1 and V-2 rocket bombs, on anti-aircraft and aerial rockets, and on rockets for

meteorological use. He also delves into the more visionary aspects of the rocket, as follows:

"The value of rockets may prove as great in peace-time. . . If you could look farther into the future, beyond the next decade, you could envision uses of rockets that can now be only dreams. Travel through space to the Moon and Mars is such a dream, and rockets may make the dream come true. Rockets alone can stand the scrutinizing examination of engineers who have calculated the mechanical and energy requirements of travel through space . . . . As they are improved, it is quite possible that transportation through the upper atmosphere at speeds higher than the speed of sound may be an everyday occurrence. The V-2 rocket with its mile-per-second speed and its range high into the stratosphere has opened up new vistas of rocket travel. Ideas that ten years ago were considered wildly imaginative are no longer considered as visionary. The future of rockets has its practical as well as its imaginative possibilities."

—USOWI.



## CONCLUSION.

The foregoing survey brings out the advanced nature of the system of administration during the Rāmāyaṇa period. It is interesting to note that the Rāmāyaṇa polity was a development of the Vedic polity and that it anticipated to a great extent the later and more elaborate political system of the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya. There has been a certain amount of continuity in the Hindu administrative institutions, though these have adapted themselves to the changing conditions of life, in the different periods.

Some have ventured to state that the history of ancient India is devoid of any political importance, as there is no unbroken record of the development of political institutions. The above survey will clearly show that much might be learnt about the polity of ancient India from the literature of the period. Recent researches have proved that ancient Hindu political institutions, despite foreign invasions, have preserved a vitality of their own, through long ages. The ancient Hindus tried various political experiments from time to time: absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, republican forms of government and democracy. But from the Vedic period onwards monarchy was consolidating itself as the normal form of government. In the later Vedic literature, however, like the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the Yajur Veda and the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa we meet with references to different kinds of republican institutions. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa refers to the Svarājya and Vairājya forms of government. In the Mahābhārata references to the republican form of government called Gaṇa are met with. Further, the Mahābhārata also expatiates on the policy to be followed by a monarch regarding the Gaṇa organisations.

On an examination of the material in ancient Indian literature, it is found that the republican forms of government prevailed only in certain areas. The republican states were always in danger of being swallowed up by powerful neighbours or by powerful imperial states as might be seen even to-day in Europe.

During the Buddhistic period we find the republican form of government flourishing. Kauṭilya praises republics for their

efficiency. We meet with references in the Arthaśāstra to many self-governing countries like the Licchavis, Mallakas, Madrakas, Kukuras, Kuru-pāncālas, Kāmbhojas and Saurāṣṭras. In the Mauryan period, however, many of the republics had lost their independence and become merged in the empire. The Mauryan policy seems to have been to reduce the weak states including republics by force and allow an honorable existence only to the strong, united in leagues, as they were too difficult to be conquered. Emperor Aśoka was at the head of a confederation of states which were allowed to maintain their independence as far as internal administration was concerned. The republican form of government was only an exception and not the rule in ancient India. Monarchy has always been the popular form of government in India, the only oscillation being between more constitutional and less constitutional forms of it.

Epic kingship was in its essentials akin to Vedic kingship. The kingdoms under the Epic kings were larger in size, and there was a well defined division of functions between the king and his ministers. The kings in the Rāmāyaṇa age had the same rights, duties and privileges as the Vedic kings. The representative institutions like the *Sabhā*, the *Paura* and the *Jānapada* acted as checks on them in place of the *Samiti* of the Vedic times. The elements that went to restrict the king's absolutism were the peoples' voice in the choice of their king, the limitations imposed on him by the Coronation oath and the king's dependence on the ministry and the various representative assemblies of the people. That ancient India realised the value of democratic institutions is seen from the existence of popular institutions like the *Samiti*, the *Sabhā*, the *Paura*, the *Jānapada*, etc. The *Samiti* or the representative assembly of the Vedic age was a very powerful body. It exercised the right to elect a king and acted as a consultative body on all matters. The *Samiti* was the parent folk-assembly for many of the representative institutions which figure in later history. These went by different names in the different periods of history as *Rāṣṭra*, *Pragraha-sabhā*, *Prakṛti*, *Sabhāsad* or simply *Sabhā*. Though the designations of these democratic bodies underwent changes from time to time, their functions remained practically the same. The king had



necessarily to consult these on all administrative matters. The functions of the Vedic *Samiti* were exercised by the *Paura-jānapada* in the Rāmāyaṇa period. Questions such as Rāma's coronation, the election of a successor after Daśaratha's death, etc. were brought before them. Jāyaswāl is of opinion that the *Paura-jānapada* was an incarnation of the old *Samiti*, a phoenix arisen out of the ashes of the *Samiti*. We find the *Paura-jānapada* playing an important role in the administration of the state not only in the Epic period but also in the Mauryan period.

Throughout the early epic period, the details of administration were in the hands of competent ministers. The *Amātya-gaṇa* of the Rāmāyaṇa may be said to correspond to the cabinet of the present-day. In the later Mauryan epoch also we find the council of ministers or *mantri-pariṣad* playing a prominent part in the administration of the country. The *Arthaśāstra* uses the term *Pariṣad* or the council and emphasises its importance. The king had to act only with the approval and co-operation of the Council. According to Kautilya all matters of state had to be discussed by the Council of ministers—the decision of the majority being adhered to.

The Council was thus an indispensable unit in state administration, during the Rāmāyaṇa period as well as in the Mauryan period. The king's council figures very largely even in later treatises like *Śukranīti*, *Manusmṛti*, etc. Another interesting feature in the ancient Hindu polity was the office of the *Purohita*. The *Purohita* was a figure of conspicuous importance from the Vedic age to the close of the Hindu period. He played a notable part in the administration of the country, being a confidential adviser of the king in matters spiritual and secular.

The village administration of the Mauryan period was also very similar to that mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa. The village officials like the *Gopa*, etc., had their parallel in the *Grāma-ghoṣa-mahattaras* of the Rāmāyaṇa age. Further the systematised municipal administration which existed under the Mauryas was but an improvement on that of the Rāmāyaṇa period.

The military organisation under the Mauryas based on the traditional fourfold system was only a continuation of the organisation which existed in the Rāmāyaṇa period. The arrangement of the army in different battle arrays described in the Arthaśāstra finds a counterpart in the Vyūhas of the Rāmāyaṇa period.

The sources of public revenue had increased by the time of the Arthaśāstra. In addition to the three main sources, *viz.*, tributes, taxes and royalties (which remained the same in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Bhārata and the Maurya periods) further sources such as the profits of coinage, forced loans, and other contributions were exploited.

From the glimpse we obtain of the political life in the Arthaśāstra, we find that the general features of administration in the Mauryan age were practically like those of the earlier periods. Such elaborate systems of administration as are portrayed in the Arthaśāstra, of Kauṭilya did not arise all of a sudden. These institutions must have been the result of gradual growth and evolution.

We may conclude that the system of administration during the Rāmāyaṇa period was far from rudimentary and anticipated very much that of the later periods. It will compare favourably even with the administration of modern times.



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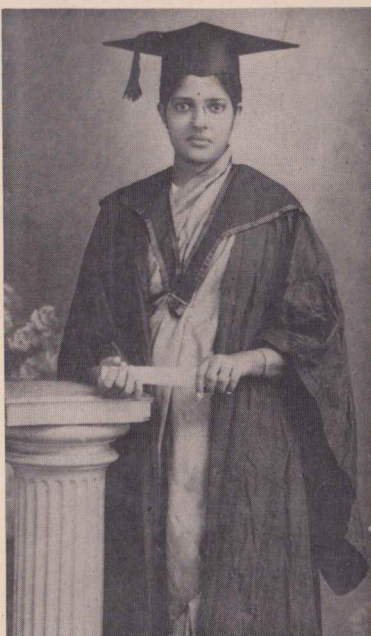
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